DR. TOM STAMMERS (BRITISH)
LECTURER IN MODERN EUROPEAN CULTURAL HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

## Internationalising the French Revolution (c.1930-1960): The Origins and Eclipse of a Historiographical Paradigm

This article sketches an alternative narrative for the origins of global historiography on the French Revolution. It argues that the thesis of Robert Palmer and Jacques Godechot regarding an Atlantic Revolution grew out of debates in interwar France. French historians first took a 'global turn' with the founding of the Institut International de l'Histoire de la Révolution Française in 1936. Its founding members, Philippe Sagnac and Boris Mirkine-Guétzevitch, were committed to making revolutionary historiography an instrument for promoting internationalism in an age of immense diplomatic insecurity. The IIHRF was pioneering for the geographical range, interdisciplinary focus and extended chronology it brought to studying the French Revolution. It was, however, also profoundly marked by French geopolitical interests, and deep-rooted assumptions of cultural superiority, connected to the study of 'civilisation'. The closure of the IIHRF after the Nazi occupation, and its relocation to New York, inaugurated an intriguing new chapter in Franco-American intellectual exchanges. In the wake of the war, however, the diplomatic value of the IIHRF was redundant and its intellectual agenda eclipsed by the rise of alternative ways of conceiving of international history, as well as the challenge of decolonisation. The evolution and ultimate failure of the IIHRF raises intriguing questions about the changing significance of 1789 as a political landmark, the different methodologies of 'international', 'Atlantic' and 'world history', and the reshaping of research paradigms at the dawn of the Cold War.

## La mondialisation de la Révolution française (c.1930-60) : les origines et l'éclipse d'un paradigm historiographique

Cet article présente une nouvelle lecture des origines de l'historiographie mondiale pour l'étude de la Révolution française. Il y sera notamment démontré que la thèse d'une « révolution transatlantique » proposée par Robert Palmer et Jacques Godechot en 1955 fut inspirée des débats français spécifiques à la période de l'entre-deux-guerres.

En France, les historiens adoptèrent le « global turn » dans les années 1930s avec la création de l'Institut International de l'Histoire de la Révolution française. C'est dans une période d'incertitude diplomatique que ses membres fondateurs, Philippe Sagnac et Boris Mirkine-Guétzevitch, se penchèrent sur l'historiographie de la Révolution afin d'encourager le développement des relations internationales/d'échanges internationaux.

Grâce à sa dimension interdisciplinaire et à l'étendue non seulement géographique mais également chronologique de ses travaux, l'IIHRF joua un rôle de précurseur dans l'étude de la Révolution. Profondément régi par les intérêts géopolitiques de l'Etat français, l'institut était ancré dans une tradition de présomption de supériorité culturelle, liée à l'étude de « civilisation ». Ainsi, sa fermeture après l'occupation nazie, puis son déplacement à New York, engendra une phase singulière de relations intellectuelles entre la France et les Etats-Unis. Après la guerre, cependant, la valeur diplomatique de l'IIHRF était démodée et son programme intellectuel étais rapidement éclipsé par la montée des autres manières de penser l'histoire internationale, aussi bien que le défi de décolonisation. Le développement de l'IIHRF jusqu'à son échec/disparition interroge le symbolisme de l'année 1789 en tant que repère politique, les méthodologies diverses de l'histoire internationale ainsi que la reconfiguration des études historiques en général, à l'aube de la Guerre Froide.

Globalizing the French Revolution in Interwar France

> For all their professional attention to the past, historians are a remarkably forgetful lot when it comes to the efforts of their predecessors. In the hundred or so years that have passed since the initial professionalization of the discipline of history, the span of historiography considered relevant in any given field has steadily contracted as the sheer amount of writing about the past has increased. This process of foreshortening is most apparent in those fields with a dense historiographical tradition, such as the French Revolution.[1]

Lynn Hunt's warning about scholarly amnesia came in 1995, and still holds true. The study of the Revolution, like all fields of research, generates its own dynamics of remembrance and forgetting. The extraordinary proliferation and geographical diversity of research over the past twenty years has helped steer revolutionary historiography out of "the interpretive cul-de-sac" where it had stalled since the Bicentennary.[2] A host of new agendas have emerged for understanding the late eighteenth century, powerfully inflected by our current predicaments, from international banking crises to extra-legal incarceration, from the menace of religious extremism to disparities in global development.[3] Tracing such issues has led historians of France to look far beyond the borders of the hexagon, and proclaim their allegiance to a new genre of comparative, entangled and connective histories. In the process the Enlightenment too has been dramatically de-centred and globalized.[4] Suzanne Desan has proposed that we stand on the brink of a new era of "internationalizing the French Revolution", finally

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[1] Lynn Hunt, "Forgetting and Remembering: The French Revolution Then and Now," *American Historical Review* 100, no.4 (1995): 1119-35, here p.119.

[2] Lynn Hunt, "The Experience of Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 32, no.4 (2009): 671-78, here p.671.

[3] Paul Cheney et al., "La Révolution française à l'heure du global turn", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* (hereafter "*AHRF*"), 374 (2013):157-85.

[4] Sebastian Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History: An Historiographical Critique," *American Historical Review* 117 (2012): 999-1027.

liberating scholarship from the conceptual shackles of the nation-state, an idol revered by Marxists and Revisionists alike.[5]

This dramatic widening of vision has outstripped the renewal of hexagonal narratives, at the risk of distorting the influence exerted by events at the periphery compared with those at the metropole.[6] It has also unsettled assumptions about the swing to modernity, and the emancipatory role accorded to 1789.[7] Looking back on his early career in 1985, Robert Palmer underlined the big, edifying themes that had previously motivated the American research agenda:

> History flourished when it was thought to illustrate something of permanent importance, such as the long road to liberty of democracy, the formation of national unity, the rise of science, the progress of Western Civilization, or simply the stages in an evolutionary development. Today our knowledge is more piecemeal, and knowledge offers no firm grounds for optimism.[8]

Any historian of the French Revolution can quickly enumerate the intellectual shifts that account for Palmer's sense of disillusionment, even disorientation: from the 1960s Revisionist critique of the class categories and teleologies within the social interpretation, to the 1970s anti-totalitarian analysis by François Furet, and the evidence marshalled by provincial, cultural, gender and colonial historians in the 1980s of Jacobin complicity in patriarchy, racism, even genocide.[9] Over the same period, within the social sciences, the triumph of the structuralist interpretation of revolutions emphasized systemic break-down rather than popular voluntarism, thus obviating the animating power of positive ideals. Meanwhile, the proliferation of uprisings in the developing world bucked any notion of an exemplary

[5] Suzanne Desan, "Internationalizing the French Revolution," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 29.2 (2011): 137-60.
[6] David Bell, "Questioning the Global Turn: The Case of the French Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 371, no.1 (2014): 1-24.
[7] Guy Lemarchand, "La Revolution Atlantique aujourd'hui, mythe ou réalité?" in *En hommage à Claude Mazauric. Pour la Révolution françai*se, eds. Christine Le Bozec, Eric Wauters (Rouen: Université de Rouen, 1998): 501-07, here pp.506-07.
[8] R.R. Palmer, "A Century of French History in America," *French Historical Studies* 14, no.2 (1985): 160-75, here p.174.
[9] For a lucid recent overview, see Jack Censer, *Debating Modern Revolutions: The Evolution of Revolutionary Ideas* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

French model and defied inclusion within a common revolutionary 'narrative'.[10] A glance at the latest, exciting history of the age of revolutions emphasizes the late eighteenth century not as an era of burgeoning democracy, but rather as a time of primitive globalization, haywire international finance and crisis of governance in world empires- an interpretation which illustrates why the era 1789-1815 still profoundly matters, but falls short on why citizens should ascribe to its values today.[11]

But when did this 'internationalizing' trend in historiography emerge? It is important to recall that in contrast to most other topics, the study of the French Revolution was "internationalised very early on and characterized by particularly dense communication across national borders."[12] Furthermore, the terms 'international history', 'world history', 'global history' and 'transnational history' are far from synonymous but instead represent different intellectual genealogies and denote overlapping but distinct objects of inquiry. Whilst each approach is committed to somehow going beyond the nation-state, they differ in how far they treat the latter as a meaningful unit to think with, how far they seek to subvert existing geopolitical frameworks, as well as their preferred scale of analysis.[13] Until the 1960s or 1970s, these crucial differeces were subsumed within the broad church of international history, which had grown out of but was by no means restricted to forms of diplomatic history. In this earlier, less reflexive, era of scholarship, doing international history carried few theoretical suppositions but loosely described any inquiry whose geography transcended the boundaries of any one nation-state; despite this elasticity, whether 1789 was interpreted through the lens of 'international', 'global' or even 'universal' history carried important implications, as we shall see.

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[10] Noel Parker, *Revolutions and History: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), pp.135-59; Bailey Stone, *The Anatomy of Revolution Revisited: A Comparative Analysis of England, France and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.1-23.

[11] Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce. Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010); Jeremy Adelman, "An Age of Imperial Revolutions," *The American Historical Review* 113, no.2 (2008): 319-40; Lynn Hunt, Suzanne Desan and William Max Nelson, eds., *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

[12] Matthias Middell, Lluis Roura, "The Various Forms of Transcending the Horizon of National History Writing," and Jean-Clément Martin, "The French Revoluton and its Historiographies," in Middell, Roura eds., *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 1-35, 343-376, here p.25.

[13] Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris, Jacques Revel, "Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History," *International History Review* 33.4 (2011): 573-84; C.A. Bayly et al., "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History", *American Historical Review* 111, no.5 (2006): 1441-1464; Akira Iriye, *Global and Transnational History: The Past, the Present and the Future* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

According to standard accounts of revolutionary historiography, the internationalising current first peaked in the 1950s with the collaboration of Robert Palmer and Jacques Godechot. This was a *revolution manqué,* for the Palmer-Godechot partnership was met with incomprehension and derision. Indeed, the ill-fated presentation of Palmer and Godechot at the Rome International Congress of 1955 has frequently been re-told as typifying the depths of Cold War paranoia and the unwillingness of scholars on both right and left to abandon their particularist prejudices.[14] Palmer and Godechot's contention was simple: that the famous revolutions in America and France should be conceived together as profoundly interconnected moments in a single wave of unrest that spread in the half century from the 1770s throughout Europe and the Atlantic seaboard. Yet this seemingly mild proposition provoked a storm of criticism and controversy in Rome. To delegates from the People's democracies of Eastern Europe, the idea of a single transatlantic revolution sounded unacceptably like a hymn to the special destiny of the West.[15] Professor Lesnodorski pointed out that Poland had been a centre for radical reform in the 1790s, despite its distance from the Atlantic. Socialists jeered at the idea that the Atlantic was a region defined by freedom; Eric Hobsbawm mischievously asked if the ocean couldn't also be defined as a region in which witches had been persecuted and burned?[16] Palmer gave his own bitter recollection of how the thesis of an Atlantic revolution went down. "A famous British diplomatic historian said that there was no such subject. A then young but later famous British Marxist historians said that he hoped that no such subject would ever be heard of at any future congresses. We were accused, then and later, of being apologists for NATO and the new-fangled idea of an Atlantic community." The reaction was similarly hostile from French audiences whenever the

[14] Alain Cabantous, "Résistance de principe ou lucidité intellectuelle? Les historiens français et l'histoire Atlantique," *Revue historique* 663 (2012): 705-26, here pp.706-707; Bernard Gainot, "La contribution de Jacques Godechot aux Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française," *AHRF* 353 (2008), pp.123-127; David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Introduction: The Age of Revolutions 1760-1840- Global Causation, Connection and Comparison," in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context c.1760-1840*, eds. Armitage and Subrahmanyam (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): xii-xxxii, here pp.xvi-xviii.
[15] Wolfgang Schmale, "Révolution française, revolution occidentale," in *La Révolution francaise: idéaux, singularités, influences. Journée d'études en homage à Albert Soboul, Jacques Godechot et Jean-René Suratteau*, ed. Robert Chagny (Grenoble: Presses Universaires de Grenoble, 2002): 3-10, here pp.3-4.
[16] Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp.26-29.

pair re-stated their argument, alarmed that the paradigmatic status of the Great Revolution was put in jeopardy: "Not only Marxism but a certain French national self-image was offended."[17]

In spite, or rather because, of the hostility that their intervention aroused, Palmer and Godechot sparked a new debate in the late 1950s: was the French Revolution 'French or Western'? Historians from around the continent were drawn into the fray, including Richard Cobb, Alfred Cobban, Marcel Reinhardt and Ernest Wangermann. Peter Amann noted perceptively that the debate had been enabled by the "crisis of the nation-state in the twentieth century," as the challenges of fascism, communism and the dawning of a bipolar world dented its analytic relevance.[18] In the eyes of his critics, Palmer's crime amounted to "minimizing or belittling the French Revolution or diluting it into some vague international movement."[19] His Gallic friends indeed breathed a sigh of relief when Palmer later appeared to concede that 1789 was indeed *sui generis* among the roster of eighteenth-century revolutions.[20] For Godechot, the negative reaction to the paper was particularly frustrating, since he was responding to a theme set by the organizers in Rome and he lacked any particular affection for America at this time (he complained bitterly about the difficulties getting into the country for his Princeton fellowship in 1954, and was mortified by American cuisine).[21] His ill-advised foray into Atlantic history blackened his reputation among his Marxist colleagues, and possibly cost him promotion to the Sorbonne.[22] Despite Godechot's best efforts, the Atlantic agenda disappeared from French scholarship for a generation, just as American treatment of the origins of their revolution

[17] Robert Forster et. al, "American historians remember Jacques Godechot", *French Historical Studies* 16, no.4 (1990): 879-92, here p.883.
[18] Peter Amann, "Introduction" in *Eighteenth-Century Revolution: French or Western?* (New York: Lexington, 1963): vii-x, here p.viii.
[19] Palmer, "A Century of French History," p.171.
[20] Jean-René Suratteau, *La Révolution française. Certitudes et controversies* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1973), p.17.
[21] Jacques Godechot, *Un jury pour la Révolution* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1974), pp.358-60; Forster et al., "American historians remember Jacques Godechot," p.880.
[22] In outlining possible successors to Lefebvre's chair of revolutionary history at the Sorbonne, Soboul wrote in a letter to Jacques Suratteau, "Godechot, atlantique?" before concluding that "Labrousse est le seul digne." See Julien Louvrier, "Albert Soboul et la Société des Études Robespierristes," *AHRF* 353 (2008): 209-34.

became increasingly Anglo-centric. Only in the past few years has the rich tangle of European interests and the interconnected cultural universe of the revolutionary Atlantic been reappraised.[23]

Bruised but unbowed, both men elaborated their thoughts in major monographs that also highlighted their difference of outlook. A social historian by disposition, with a passionate interest in demography, Godechot's *La Grande Nation* from 1956 was an archivally-dense study of how France exported her armies, laws, governing structures and ideologies to the territories annexed in western Europe across the 1790s. If the diplomatic history of the Revolution went back to nineteenth-century analysts like von Sybel and Albert Sorel, Godechot's tack was less about treaties and protocols than about the power of France to overhaul the civil institutions of neighbouring states in pursuit of fiscal and political integration. [24] Emmet Kennedy has written perceptively that if Godechot was a rather erratic historian of the Atlantic, he was the ideal historian of the European Union.[25] Palmer, by contrast, pressed on with a sweeping, two-volume work that first reinterpreted the 'challenge' of the American colonists to their British masters, before revealing how this 'struggle' for freedom was then re-enacted in western and central Europe. Far from being an apologist for US foreign policy, Palmer aimed the thrust of his arguments at the squeamish, bourgeois American who tried to "deny his own revolutionary background and suppress even the memory of it, lest it set a bad example."[26] For Palmer the eighteenth-century assault against ossified privilege retained contemporary salience in the campaign for Civil Rights and racial de-segregation.[27] Based on extensive reading in five languages, a gripping narrative style and astonishing powers of synthesis, *The Age of Democratic Revolution* scooped the 1960 Bancroft Prize.

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[23] Manuela Albertone and Antonio de Francesco, "Introduction: Beyond Atlantic History" in *Rethinking the Atlantic World: Europe and America in the Age of Democratic Revolutions*, eds. Albertone, Francesco (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 1-14. See also Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, "Atlantic Cultures in the Age of Revolution" in *William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (2017): 667-696.

[24] Godechot, *La Grande nation: l'expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde de 1789 à 1799* (Paris: Aubier, 1956).

[25] Emmet Kennedy, "Jacques Godechot," in *New Historical Writing in Twentieth-Century France: French Historians 1900-2000*, eds., Philip Daileader, Philip Whalen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), p.315.

[26] Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* 2 vols (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1959-64), vol.1, p.10.

[27] Palmer, "The Great Inversion: America and Europe in the Eighteenth-Century Revolution," in *Ideas in History. Essays Presented to Louis Gottschalk by his Former Students*, eds. Richard Herr, Harold T. Parker (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1965), pp.18-19.

Martyrs to the cause of international history, both men have been subject to enthusiastic reappraisal in recent years. Palmer's seminal book is now back in a fiftieth anniversary edition. David Armitage sees this bygone text as still worthy of emulation. A prelude to the new crop of global, comparative and 'big' history, Palmer's synthesis was "a dawn mistaken for a sunset", whose relevance has only increased since the 1989 revolutions and the Arab spring.[28] Godechot too has been championed as an original spirit, who broke from a "French historiography which was wilfully *hexagonale*."[29] This openess was reflected in his travel itinerary, which in addition to trips to North and South America, saw Godechot every five years attend the international congresses on historical science, taking him from Rome to Stockholm, Vienna and Moscow.[30] By extension those scholars who failed to embrace looked beyond French borders have been rebuked in recent years for clinging to delusional ideas of national exceptionalism. In a much-cited article Cécile Vidal has exposed the reticence of French historians towards the pull of the Atlantic; Marxist historians like Marcel Reinhardt and Jacques Suratteau in the 1950s have been taxed with propping up a rotten Jacobin insularity.[31] Such critiques carry real bite because they intersect with the wider accusation that French historians have proved singularly unwilling to face up to their colonial past, not least as a slave empire in the Caribbean.[32]

Yet rehearsing the story of this *malentendu* has obscured the long gestation and true origin of these ideas. Palmer had written his thesis at Cornell on the relationship between the American and French Revolutions in the early 1930s under the supervision of that sceptical critic of the *philosophes*, Carl Becker. He never published it, brushing it off as a "youthful indiscretion", but like his other mentor, Louis Gottschalk at Chicago, the biographer of Lafayette, he was profoundly interested in the transmission of ideas of liberty across the ocean.[33] In the 1930s Palmer, Gottschalk and another Becker student, Leo Gershoy, were fascinated by the Founding Fathers' debt to the ideas of

[28] Armitage, "Unfulfilled Promises: R.R Palmer's *The Age of Democratic Revolution* fifty years on", *TLS*, March 21 2014, pp.14-15.
[29] Michel Vovelle, "Introduction: Jacques Godechot, historien de la Révolution française," *AHRF 281* (1990): 303-07, here p.304.,
[30] Marc Bouloiseau, "Mon ami Jacques Godechot", *AHRF* 281 (1990): 341-344, here p. 343.
[31] Cécile Vidal, "The Reluctance of French Historians to Address Atlantic History," *Southern Quarterly* 43 (2006), pp.153-89.
[32] Marcel Dorigny, *Révoltes et revolutions en Europe et aux Amériques* (1773-1802) (Paris: Belin, 2002), pp.18-21, 27.
[33] Isser Woloch, "Robert R. Palmer. 11 January 1909, 11 June 2002," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 148.3 (2004): 393-98, here p.394.

eighteenth-century France, and initiated correspondence with French counterparts. Meanwhile Crane Brinton at Harvard was pioneering the sociological study of comparative revolution, tracking the progress of the same "fever" in its English, French, American and Russian variants.[34] Eighteenth-century political struggles gained extra piquancy when read through the rise of the European dictatorships. In June 1940, fearful for the "impending destruction of France", Palmer predicted to his publisher Alfred Knopf that "we are undoubtedly on an upswing of emphasis on the foundations, historical and ideological, of democracy."[35]

For Jacques Godechot too, fascination with the international dimension pre-dated the Second World War. His doctoral thesis which was begun under Mathiez and complted under Lefebvre had documented the role of French army officers in the Italian campaigns and he soon established an expertise on what happened when the Revolution headed south of the Alps. In 1935, sickened by the growing anti-Semitic agitation in Strasbourg, Godechot took a new teaching post at the Brest naval academy, where he started to teach the history of the Atlantic.[36] He continued to dabble in these researches even during his years in hiding after 1940, having fled in disguise with his family to Toulouse in order to evade wearing the yellow star.[37] The fruit of his work on the Atlantic first appeared in a curious textbook from 1947, which contains an exalted tribute to French salvation on the oceans and the regeneration of the West through uniting the intellectual heritages of the Old World with the material resources of the New:

> Is an Atlantic civilization going to be born, founded on the humanism of old Europe updated by American technology (*machinisme*)? What a magnificent conclusion to the history of the Atlantic, if the ocean could become the stage for the flourishing of a western civilization

[34] John Harvey, "'History Written with a Little Spite': Palmer, Brinton and the American Debate on the French Revolution," *Historical Reflections* 37.3 (2011): 38-55.
[35] James Friguglietti, "R.R. Palmer and Georges Lefebvre: Their Collaboration and Friendship," *Proceedings of the Western Society of French Histo*ry 37 (2009): 337-50, here p.339.
[36] Godechot, *Un jury*, pp.316-17.
[37] Vovelle, "Hommage à Albert Soboul, Jacques Godechot, Jean-René Suratteau," in *La Révolution francaise. Ideaux, singularités, influences*: ix-xix, here p.xii.

where man, liberated from the machine, could finally dedicate himself entirely to the ideal of progress and peace.[38]

The convergent inquiries of Palmer and Godechot were encouraged by their common mentor, Georges Lefebvre.[39] Lefebvre's own international perspective can be dated to a commission in 1930 to produce a textbook situating the French Revolution in a global framework. This came from Philippe Sagnac, the editor of the 'Peuples et civilizations' series for Felix Alcan, and at first Lefebvre's co-author on the project.[40] Almost entirely overlooked by historians, Philippe Sagnac exercised a decisive influence on Lefebvre, Godechot and Palmer in the 1930s and 1940s, and merits belated recognition as the true catalyst for internationalizing the interpretation of the French Revolution. Godechot and Palmer should therefore be considered as the true "heirs" of Sagnac, for the "Atlanticism" they espoused long preceded the creation of the North Atlantic Charter.[41]

Building on the observations of Olivier Bétourné, Aglaia Hartig and Jean-Numa Ducange, this article explores an alternative periodization and origin point for this extra-national historiographical trend. The years after the Treaty of Versailles, as Claude Mazauric has stressed, were central for the *mondialisation* of research.[42] Two of the motors driving this trend were Philippe Sagnac and his collaborator Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch, and their joint enterprise from 1936, the Institut international de l'histoire de la Révolution Française. The IIHRF slightly preceded the Institut de l'histoire de la Révolution Française overseen by Lefebvre and that was created by ministerial decree in October 1937, although by the early 1960s the international elder sister been wiped from institutional memory.[43] Yet at its height it attracted to one hundred and fifty distinguished and cosmopolitan members, and celebrated the era of the French Revolution as a shared heritage for Frenchmen, for Europeans and for all believers in Western civilization as it entered a period of existential crisis. The

[38] Godechot, *Histoire de l'Atlantique* (Paris: Bordas, 1947), p.333.
[39] Friguglietti, "R.R. Palmer and Georges Lefebvre," p.344; Jacques Godechot, *Un jury*, p.358.
[40] Jean-Numa Ducange, *La Révolution française et l'histoire du monde. Deux siècles de débats historiques et politiques, 1815-1991* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014), pp.139-40.
[41] Olivier Bétourné, Aglaia Hartig, *Penser la Révolution française. Deux siècles de passion française* (Paris: Éditions de la découverte, 1989), p.117.
[42] Claude Mazauric, "Retour sur 200 ans d'histoire et de révolution" in *La Révolution française: une histoire toujours vivante*, ed. Michel Biard (Paris: Tallandier, 2010): 421-45, here pp.433-34.
[43] Marcel Reinhard, "L'Institut d'histoire de la Révolution française", *Revue historique* 226, no.1 (1961): 153-56.

first part of the article will describe the foundation of the IIHRF within the Sorbonne, and Sagnac's attempt to overhaul the historiographical agenda; the second section will outline some of the contradictions that troubled the Institute's political and scholarly objectives; the third section will trace the fate of the Institut after 1939, and account for its subsequent eclipse as the political and intellectual grounds for collaboration between French and American historians were reconceived. Considered against this backdrop, the intervention of Palmer and Godechot in 1955 appears not as a premature folly, or unhappily ahead of its time, but rather as the last echo of an agenda which had been conceived within a very different paradigm for international history two decades before.

Before turning to the activities of Sagnac and the IIHRF, it is useful to delineate three characteristics of the interwar historiographical environment. First, the years after 1918 were pivotal in the emergence of comparativist and internationalist approaches across all historical periods, as scholars were profoundly shaped by the co-operative mission of the League of Nations. This fraternal perspective accompanied inquiries into the possibility of a common European 'spirit' or 'heritage', and the valorisation of cultural movements which had implanted shared values across national borders.[44] Unsurprisingly, the 1920s and 1930s were central to the conception of the Enlightenment as a unitary, continent-spanning phenomenon.[45] In contrast to this liberal current, an alternative mode of internationalism radiated out from the Soviet Union. Russian historians made a signal contribution to socio-economic interpretations of 1789, especially the land question, and disseminated a common set of methodological tools within the European Left.[46] In Paris, the mixing of national perspectives by the cosmopolitan backgrounds of the city's intellectuals. If colonial nationalists flocked to this 'anti-imperial metropolis', they joined many other refugees from the European dictatorships.[47] For distinguished exile historians such as Gaetano Salvemini or Franco Venturi, who became friends with

[44] Menno Spiering and Michael Wintle, eds., *Ideas of Europe since 1914. The Legacy of the First World War* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Mark Hewitson and Matthew d'Auria, eds., *Europe in Crisis. Intellectuals and the European Idea, 1917-57* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2012).
[45] See J.B. Shank "Science," in Daniel Brewer (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the French Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 60-77.
[46] J.C. Martin, "The French Revolution and its Historiographies," in *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing* eds. Matthias Middel, Lluis Roura (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), 343-76; Gianna Oliva, "Georges Lefebvre et les historiens russes de la Révolution française," *AHRF* 237 (1979): 399-410.
[47] Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Godechot, celebrating the ferment of reform in eighteenth-century Italy, or the short-lived Jacobin republic in Naples (1796-99), was a means of defying Mussolini's monopoly over the Italian past. "It was indeed the moral and political reaction to fascism and to its totalitarian and nationalist impositions," claimed Galante Garrone in his tribute to Lefebvre, "which made a few of our historians feel the need to look for the links between our Risorgimento and European history, and by this means, to come close to the great Revolution."[48]

Second, the historiography of the Revolution remained indissoluble from pressing political concerns. Prominent right-wing historians, many of them affiliated to Action Française or elected to the Académie, denigrated the Revolution's effects on French society and national identity.[49] In retaliation, Sagnac and Lefebvre were charged with vindicating the Revolution's aspirations, both in their professional capacity as state employees at the university, but also through their part in directing the 150th anniversary celebrations on behalf of the embattled Third Republic.[50] To that extent, histories of the revolution were evaluated through their ethical and public implications. Lucid observers at the time, above all Daniel Halévy, recognized that the obsessively rehearsed historiography of the French Revolution had *produced* the political schism within France, with each camp divided by allegiance to rival symbols and heroes.[51] The supposed pacifism of Robespierre was deployed by socialist and radical historians like Georges Michon in the 1930s to argue against military opposition to European fascism.[52] Outside of France, too, academics believed that 1789 offered a master-key for decoding the battle lines in contemporary politics. In September 1943, Paul Farmer, a historian based in New York, concluded that: "No historical problem has more meaning for our own times than that raised by the great French Revolution. The crisis that marks French politics in this generation is fundamentally the continuation of a struggle begun in the last decade of the eighteenth century; it was then that its

[48] Cited in Anna Maria Rao, "La Société des Études Robespierristes, les AHRF et l'espace historiographe italien," *AHRF* 353 (2008): 275-93, here p.289, n.68.
[49] Guillaume Mazeau, "La bataille du public: les droites contre-révolutionnaires et la Révolution française dans la prémière moitié du XXe siècle," in *Transmettre la Révolution française, histoire d'un trésor perdu*, ed. Sophie Wahnich (Paris: Les Prairies ordinaires, 2013): 345-67.
[50] Pascal Ory, *Une nation pour mémoire: 1889, 1939, 1989, trois jubilés révolutionnaires* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1992), pp.31, 55-56.
[51] Daniel Halévy, *Histoire d'une histoire: la Révolution française* (Paris: Grasset, 1939).
[52] Antonio de Francesco, "The American Origins of the French Revolutionary War" in *Republics at War, 1776-1840: Revolutions, Conflicts and Geopolitcs in Europe and the Atlantic World* eds. Pierre Serna, Antonio de Francesco, Judith Miller (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013): 27-45, here pp.27-28.

elements first appeared and that their relationships were first indicated."[53] For the friends who sought to transmit its lessons, as for the enemies who decried its baleful influence, the drama of the first Revolution brimmed with precursors and analogies for the present.

Thirdly, the debate on 1789 was not just transnational but also multi- and inter-disciplinary, with interventions from many different intellectual fields. If Georges Lefebvre's links with the *Annales* school are well-known, informing his study of the relationship between history and biology, this melding of expertise was also fostered by the research environment at the Sorbonne.[54] Historians participated in the same forums as political scientists, constitutional theorists, sociologists, psychologists, art historians, linguists and literary critics. The latter were especially important in fixing the co-ordinates of eighteenth-century ideas, especially Paul Hazard, Daniel Mornet or Ferdinand Baldensperger. This wide conversation between analysts of French culture encouraged the adoption of umbrella terms like 'civilization' which could speak to multiple constituencies, both inside and beyond the university system. Simultaneously descriptive and normative, this ambivalent term emblematizes the tensions within French historical writing that, according to Antoine Lilti "has always aspired to be both Eurocentric and universalist."[55] The intellectual and moral valence of civilization as an organizing matrix locates what was particular about the historiography of the 1930s and 1940s in France and in the United States, where intellectual history was enlisted as a form of "civic education, moral edification and, not least, political confidence-building during the Cold War."[56] At the same time, the impatience with the looseness, the hubris, and the ideological implications of the term 'civilisation' weakened its credibility over the course of the 1950s. The need to rethink European historiography in the context of decolonization brought these tensions to the surface, as the contours of European international history were challenged by other readings of the

[53] Paul Farmer, *France Reviews its Revolutionary Origins: Social Politics and Historical Opinion in the Third Republic* (New York: Ocatgon, 1973), p.1.
[54] Pierre Serna, "Lefebvre au travail, le travail de Georges Lefebvre: un océan d'érudition sans continent Libérté?" *La Revolution française* 2 (2010), https://journals.openedition.org/lrf/165; André Tulier, *Histoire de l'universite de Paris et de la Sorbonne II: De Louis XIV à la crise de 1968* (Paris: Nouvelle librairie de France, 1994), pp.471-505.
[55] Antoine Lilti, "Does Intellectual History Exist in France? The Chronicle of a Renaissance Foretold," in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (eds.) Darrin MacMahon, Samuel Moyn (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2014): 56-73, here p.66.
[56] Jay-Werner Müller, "European Intellectual History as Contemporary History," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no.3 (2011): 574-90, here p.581.

global past. As a result, the rise and fall of Sagnac's institute illuminates not simply a lost chapter in the historiography of 1789, but a deeper methodological re-structuring in the human sciences after World War II.

## SAGNAC AND THE ORIGINS OF THE IIHRF

The tradition of history in which Sagnac worked has been obscured by the post-war dominance of the Société des Robespierristes, founded in 1907 by Albert Mathiez. The succession of brilliant historians who have been members of the society and directed its journal, the *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*- from Mathiez and Lefebvre to Godechot and Albert Soboul- represents a powerful locus of institutional memory. Most historians have tended to accept a rather dynastic view of the historical profession in France, and hardly any have asked what happened to the mainstream current of scholarship on the Revolution from which the belligerent Mathiez had broken away. This had been defined in the previous generation by Alphonse Aulard, first incumbent of the chair of revolutionary history at the Sorbonne, editor of the journal *La Révolution Française*, and instigator of the official Society for the History of the French Revolution, founded in 1888.[57] Ideological, generational and especially methodological differences led to the growing schism between Aulard and his brilliant pupil Mathiez, exacerbated by the ruptures of the First World War.[58] After Mathiez's defection, it has been presumed that the remaining Aulardistes and their research organs slowly faded into insignificance. Symptomatic of their distance from new currents in French scholarship was the donation of many of Aulard's books and papers to the Houghton library, Harvard in 1932.[59]

Yet the eclipse of the Aulardistes has been overstated. For one thing, the followers of Aulard maintained their grip on the University of Paris. Mathiez's temporary but incriminating embrace of the Bolsheviks ensured that on Aulard's retirement, he was passed over for the chair at the Sorbonne.

[57] Jacqueline Lalouette, "Du centenaire de la Révolution française à la Première guerre mondiale: une période féconde pour l'histoire modern et contemporaine," *AHRF* 353 (2008): 45-62, here pp.47-50.
[58] James Friguglietti, "La querelle Mathiez-Aulard et les origines de la Société des études robespierristes," *AHRF* 353 (2008): 63-94.
[59] Antonio da Francesco, "D'une révolution à l'autre: Alphonse Aulard face aux évenements russes de 1917," *La Révolution française* 5 (2013), n.4, https://journals.openedition.org/lrf/986.

Instead the job was given in 1923 to the conciliatory figure of Philippe Sagnac. Many of the Robespierristes no doubt resented Sagnac for taking up a position which should by all rights have been awarded to Mathiez. But Sagnac resisted any such partisanship; although he had one foot in the traditionalist camp, Lefebvre admired that "his intelligence did not shut itself off from any novelty if it could provide him with an additional elements for the understanding of the past."[60] He was on friendly terms with Lefebvre ever since they had taught in Lille and had a shared love of the region of Flanders, Lefebvre's *pays natal*.[61] Although Sagnac followed Aulard's lead by devoting his early and much-respected work to the civil legislation of the revolutionary period, he remained attentive to developments in social and economic history too, especially regarding the division of land. His stature in the field grew significantly in the early 1930s following a crisis at the Society of the History of the French Revolution. After Aulard's death, the Society presidency had passed to Louis Barthou, former prime minister, war hero and man of letters. Barthou is remembered today for his diplomatic role in trying to engineer alliances in Eastern Europe and for bringing the Soviet Union into the League of Nations, but he was also a biographer of Danton. In 1934, on a visit to Marseille Barthou was gunned down alongside King Alexander of Yugoslavia by a Bulgarian revolutionary. The shocking news was especially upsetting for members of the Society, since Barthou had drawn on his resources to keep it solvent during the difficult years of the Depression and in the teeth of competition from the Robespierristes.

The members of the Society now faced extinction and entrusted their journal, *La Révolution Française*, and their loyalty to Sagnac at the Sorbonne. "Not wanting to let disappear a periodical which dates from 1881," Sagnac told the Rector in 1935, "and which can alone have a large enough framework to study the Revolution in France and abroad, across the 18th and 19th centuries, I have accepted in principle this heavy responsibility."[62] Sagnac now had a learned society, an esteemed journal and the University of Paris at his disposal: he used these advantages to completely overhaul

[60] Georges Lefebvre, "Nécrologie- Philippe Sagnac (1868-1954)", *Revue historique* 213 (1955): 178-81, here p.180.
[61] Hervé Leuwers, "Un siècle d'histoire de la Révolution française dans la Revue du Nord", *Revue du Nord* 386 (2010): 621-36, here pp.622-25.
[62] Paris, Archives nationales (henceforth "AN"), in AN 20010498/105, letter from Sagnac to Charléty, 7 janvier 1935.

the agenda of revolutionary history.[63] Far from dwindling into significance, the followers of the Aulard tradition were embarking on a new experiment in international history which would not just embrace the states of Europe but also cross the oceans. In the most compelling narrative of historiography in this period, Allan Potofsky rightly sees Aulard and Sagnac as pioneers of "cosmopolitan Atlanticism" in the interwar period. It is striking that "none of the subsequent holders of the chair in the History of the French Revolution, founded in 1889, treated international topics of the Revolution- no original research on the Atlantic, colonies, slavery, diplomacy or expansionism was published by the Sorbonne historian after Sagnac."[64]

The contrasts between the Robespierristes and the Aulardistes are instructive. Firstly, the former were a community of scholars, teachers and activists, employed in various echelons of the French education system. The group under Sagnac was more heterogeneous and boasted the participation of some eminent figures in French politics, including the radical leader Édouard Herriot, mayor of Lyon and president of the Chamber of Deputies. This patronage was crucial in making the case for the transformation of the Centre d'études de la Révolution française, founded by Sagnac in 1932, into an independent Institut international d'histoire de la Révolution française in 1936, charged with co-ordinating activities across the Faculty of letters at the Sorbonne. These links with government did not just furnish the Society with funds from the Ministry of National Education but also allied their activities with political objectives at home and abroad.[65] Second, the Robespierristes had a strong notion of scientific specialism, archival rigour and the importance of quantiative data, which often made them wary of 'amateurish' foreign conferences and impure methodologies.[66] Despite their respect for social science, the group around Sagnac were drawn from many different disciplines and included numerous figures outside the university too. The Comité d'études de la Révolution Française which Sagnac founded at the Sorbonne was made up by scholars from various faculties including linguistics, archaeology, political science and constitutional law. Public courses offered at the

[63] Bétourné and Hartig, *Penser la Révolution*, pp.101-04.
[64] Allan Potofsky, "The One and the Many: The Two Revoltuions Question," in *Rethinking the Atlantic World: Europe and America in the Age of Democratic Revolutions*: 17-45, here pp.23-24.
[65] These subsidies varied between 10,000, 12,000 and 15,000 francs, although funding increased to support the 1939 commemorations. See AN 20010498/105, Sagnac to Maurice Guyot, 28 février 1936.
[66] Alan Forrest, "Un effort missionnaire: la Révolution française et le CISH," *AHRF* 353 (2008): 259-73.

Sorbonne in the late 1930s studied the Revolution under many guises, with the aim of attracting "alongside scholars and students, the general public." Printed term-cards reveal conferences by foreign ambassadors were programmed alongside cultural events, such as the declamation of speeches, and a recital of revolutionary hymns by Cherubini, Rouget de Lisle and Gossec.[67]

Thirdly, if the Robespierrists adopted a narrowly scientific focus, Sagnac wanted to blast open the chronological and geographical frontiers of the field. In his 1934 editorial, Sagnac presented the scholarship of the Revolution as having evolved through three distinct orientations: from the early nineteenth century onwards there had been political, diplomatic and religious history; then from the 1890s had come the turn towards social and economic issues related to the peasantry and property relations via the ongoing work of the Commission Jaurès; now in the 1930s it was at last time to look at the Revolution's influence outside of France "There is no doubt that, from the 18th century (at a date which we can only indicate roughly) until 1815, France exercised an enormous influence on Europe and the world- a political, social, intellectual influence- that we can scarcely suspect today. The international history of the Revolution is almost entirety still to be written. There is the new and third orientation. It is on this that the Centre for Studies of the Revolution has begun attracting the attention of historians and cultivated men from all countries."[68] This international history was not simply a story of treaties and diplomacy, even if it preserved the validity of the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis. Rather, under the influence of Pierre Renouvin, founder of the modern study of international relations at the Sorbonne, it took in the totality of social, economic and cultural exchanges between rival states. Blending the history of law, religion, economics, science, linguistics and the arts, the Institute's founders promised "it will prepare the complete synthesis of this crucial era; it will study- an entirely new development- its influence in the world."[69]

This international focus represented an explicit fusion of scholarly and diplomatic interests. French politicians on the Left patronized the Society precisely as way of creating new forms of collaboration. Herriot, the honorary president, was a keen advocate of a united states of Europe. Sagnac established

[67] See the printed term-cards in AN 20010498/105.
[68] Philippe Sagnac, "Avant-Propos", *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 1 (1934): 1-5, here pp.2-3.
[69] AN, 20010498/105, "Projet, création et status- Institut d'histoire de la Révolution française".

links with scholars, politicians, journalists and institutions from across the continent. Among his first invitees to Paris were Nicolae Jorga, member of the university of Bucharest and president of the council of ministers in Romania, and Marceli Handelsman, head of the faculty of letters in Warsaw. These were complimented by closer ties with diplomatic experts at home; especially significant here were Paul Miliukov, former Russian foreign minister and Henri de Montfort, secretary of the Institut, expert on Polish and Baltic history, and editor of the review *l'Est Européen*. There was a close match between scholarly exchange and French efforts to bolster the Little Entente in central and eastern Europe. Presentations on these topics opened French eyes to lesser-known struggles for freedom. As Sagnac exclaimed, after listening to a learned paper by Józef Feldman from Cracow:

> Ah well, we know now, and for us it is a novelty, that Poland resisted, that Poland rose up, right down to its depths, down to the popular masses, that an extremely strong national sentiment resulted in her standing up to her enemies. Yet all this is perfectly new. In the same way that in the history of Italy for the Risorgimento we go back before 1850, we are in the midst of overhauling, thanks to historians, the history of this great Polish republic.[70]

Sagnac also looked south: links multiplied with Spanish intellectuals- against the backdrop of rapprochement between France and the new Republic after 1931- and even links with Greece, with professors at Athens drawing out the importance of French precedents for formulating the Rigas rebellion and the Hellenic constitutions of the 1820s.[71] Attendees at the inaugural conference of the IIHRF included academics from across the Sorbonne alongside Italian philosopher and senator Benedetto Croce, Marceli Handelsman from the University of Warsaw, Charles Webster from the London School of Economics, Nicolas Politis, the minister plenipotentiary for Greece in Paris and Greek deputy to the League of Nations, and Washington Luis, deposed president of Brazil. Name vice-president of the IIHRF, Georges Lefebvre also attended to represent the Société des Études

[70] Sagnac, "Centre d'études de la Révolutuon française: les travaux de l'année 1933-34", *La Révolution française* nouv. série 1 (1935): 46-56, here pp.48-49.
[71] A.J. Svolos "L'influence des idées de la Révolution française sur les constiutions helleniques de la Guerre d'indépendence", *La Révolution française*, nouv. série 4 (1935): 340-355. The Spanish intellectuals affiliated to the Institute include Gascon y Marin, Altamira, Fernando de los Rios, Toledano and Serrano.

Robespierristes.[72] Sagnac's stirring speech to the assembled dignitaries made clear that the period 1789-1815 was a "general history which belongs to all nations" and underlined the importance of adhering to the legacies of 1789 in a world menaced by dictatorship and extremism. The Declaration of the Rights of Man revealed the fundamental respect for the liberty of the individual and the liberty of others. With a clear allusion to Germany, Sagnac insisted: "The recovery of a nation can naturally only come, for us, from liberty. Let us try to understand this: 1789 will teach us, its aftermath also, with its deviations."[73]

The explicit geopolitical overtones of the meeting should not disguise from the fact that this was also a scientific congress, with a slew of papers on eighteenth-century topics. Looking back fondly Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch rejoiced that the International Institute at the Sorbonne had developed into a "veritable international academy, bringing together the best specialists from all countries- historians, sociologists, jurists, economists- and dedicating itself to the study of the origins, the history, the repercussions of the French Revolution in Europe and in America."[74] The scholarship it generated was not just a fig-leaf for geopolitical networking. A deeper understanding of the revolutionary period was believed to provide a window onto current dilemmas. This was certainly the view Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch who was, after Sagnac the driving force behind these meetings. A Russian Jew who had fled the Bolsheviks and settled in Paris in 1920, Mirkine-Guetzévitch was a specialist in comparative constitutional law at the Sorbonne.[75] He was remorselessly critical of the diplomatic settlement agreed after 1918, lamenting that the constitutions of the new states of central and eastern Europe had been designed by naïve professors whose understanding of legal principle was entirely divorced from the study of law-making in practice.[76] Constitutions for Mirkine-Guetzévitch had to be grasped not as theory but as part of living communities, evolving in response to circumstances. This explained his

[72] Georges Bourgin, "Chronique- la première session de l'Institut international d'histoire de la Révolution française", *Revue historique* 178, no.3 (1936): 666-68.
[73] Sagnac, "Institut international d'histoire de la Révolution francaise," *La Revolution française*, nouv. série 8 (1936), p.293.
[74] Boris Mirkine-Guetévitch, "Nos cahiers," *Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française* 1 (1946): 13-19, here pp.14-15.
[75] Dzovinar Kévonian, "Les juristes juifs russes en France et l'action internationale dans les années vingts," *Archives juives* 34 (2001-2002): 72-94, here pp.78-81, 89.
[76] Mirkine-Guetzévitch, *Les constitutions européenes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1951).

call for jurists to study concrete historical periods, such as the Revolution, since the career of a statesman like Mirabeau revealed how law should be crafted in line with practical needs.

This marriage between historical study and comparative law placed Mirkine-Guetzévitch close to Sagnac's interests; it also reflected their shared love of Aulard, whose path-breaking work on revolutionary legislation had weighed the respective importance of principle and circumstance. Aulard was also an ardent, if prudent, internationalist, and had been president for the first meeting of the international Ligue des Droits de l'homme in 1922.[77] Alfred Bayet reflected on how his understanding of 1789 shaped his faith in post-war reconciliation:

> Aulard believed that the organization of perpetual peace was perfectly possible. He recalled that the men of 89 and 93 had called expressed their wish for 'The Federation of the Human Race', that no doubt the aggression of tyrants had forced them to defend themselves, but that the nascent fatherland had among us called all men to universal fraternity. That is why, after 1918, he was one of the most ardent defenders of the League of Nations. He dedicated the last years of his life to fighting for it. Elected President of the National Federations for the League of Nations, he presided, in 1927, at the large international Congress which took place in Berlin in the Reichstag chamber. There he defended, with emotion, with a persuasive energy, the principles of Wilson, of Briand, of Herriot. In this meeting in Germany presided over by a Frenchman, he was glad to see the herald of the definitive rapprochement of peoples, a first victory for reason.[78]

But this hope of dawning fraternity was balanced by a firm insistence on France's special historical mission. For only in France in 1789 had the movement towards the affirmation of national sovereignty been matched by a commitment to universalism. French patriotism was uniquely free of the taint of selfishness, Aulard believed. By contrast nationalism in Germany always threatened to

[77] Emmanuel Naquet, "L'action de la Féderation internationale des Ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH) entre les deux guerres," *BDIC: Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 95 (2009): 53-64, here p.57.
[78] Alfred Bayet, "Réflexions sur la vie et l'oeuvre d'Alphonse Aulard" in *Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française: Alphonse Aulard* (1955): 26-32, here p.29.

plunge the Germans back to their bad old militarist ways, whatever their constitutions said. "They could put liberty in the texts, but they don't have it in the blood, like the English and the French."[79]

Mirkine-Guetzévitch also insisted on learning the lessons of the Revolution as a precondition for modern geopolitical stability. Although a keen Hispanist and expert on Latin America, his dominant interest was finding an enduring basis for European security by re-working notions of national sovereignty.[80] A keen advocate of the League of Nations, he wrote an important tract advocating a European Union in 1930, understood as the only counterweight to "two other poles of political crystallization Washington and Moscow, pan-Americanism and the USSR." In establishing a new basis for European co-operation, Mirkine-Guetzévitch felt that the "international doctrine of the French Revolution already grasped the juridical sense of international organization as a basis for peace."[81] In place of the anarchy of eighteenth-century dynastic competition, the revolutionaries had dreamed of a new legal order between free peoples. Mirkine-Guetzévitch was convinced that it was the Revolution had transformed European politics in a way only comparable with the effect of Roman law.[82] On the eve of the Second World War he was busy preparing an anthology of constitutions produced from the revolutionary era in Italy, Holland and Switzerland, determined to show that the "whole political armoury of free peoples is the result of the texts and the spirit of the Revolution."[83]

This fascination with the enduring principles of the Revolution ensured that the scholars around Sagnac broke with the tight chronological cadre of study. If the Society of Robespierristes concentrated mostly on the years 1789-1799, intensively sifting through manuscript sources, then the revamped journal *Révolution Française* announced that it was welcoming articles which stretched the limits not just to the fall of Napoleon in 1815 but far beyond. Sagnac explained that he wanted he

[79] Ibid., p.30.
[80] See Mirkine-Guétzevitch, "Preface" to Hector Hugo Barbagelata, "La Revolution française et l'Amérique latine,'" *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 5 (1936): 1-6.
[81] Mirkine-Guétzevitch, *L'Union européene* (Delagrave, Paris, 1931), p.6, 30. His co-editor Georges Scelle was also a member of the Société d'histoire de la Révolution française and believed in a federal union in Europe to avert disaster. See Jean-Michel Guieu, "Fédérer l'Europe ou subir une nouvelle catastrophe. Le discours européen du jurist Georges Scelle dans les années vingt," *Hypothèses* (2000): 47-54.
[82] Mirkine- Guétzevitch, "Le gouvernement parlémentaire de la Convention," *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 6 (1938): 47-91, here pp.48-49.
[83] Mirkine-Guétzevitch, "Études constitutionelles de la Révolution," *La Révolution française* nouv. série 18 (1939), p.178.

wanted to make it a "review of contemporary history", tracing the development of "political and social forms across the 19th and 20th centuries."[84] The result was that the publications coming out of the Sorbonne constantly underlined the present-day relevance of material from two hundred years before. Such anachronisms might have made positivists wince, but they testified to Sagnac's belief that historical subjects could acquire, "a new meaning, in light of present facts."[85] Hence an article by Jacques Godechot in 1936 on the French armies in Italy began with his reminiscences about witnessing Fascist rallies in Milan, noting parallels with the Jacobin festivals.[86] An overview of the fiscal regime created in 1789 and the inflated *assignats* carried clear lessons when the franc stood to be devalued.[87] In 1938 an article on the forced loans used by the revolutionary government in the 1790s prompted Sagnac into a tirade against any talk of trying to further squeeze the rich. Punishing the elite would only kill investment and create more unemployment, driving the masses and elites into the arms of "dictatorship"- just as they had embraced Napoleon in 1799. This was a warning from history which had to be heeded by the leaders of the Popular Front.[88]

## CONTRADICTIONS AND COMPROMISES AT THE IIHRF

Out of France's precarious diplomacy and fear of war in the 1930s hence emerged a pioneering attempt to write a an interconnected European and even trans-continental history. The scope of topics broached still impresses today, as does the mix of nationalies and varied disciplines of many of the participants. For all the multiplication of geographical perspectives, however, it was French concepts and French needs which set the tenor of debate. "Internationalism was not based on the equality of participating individuals, groups, or nations," Michel Geyer and Johannes Paulmann have observed.

[84] Sagnac, "Avant-Propos," *La Révolution française,* nouv. série 1 (1935), pp.1-2.
[85] Sagnac, "Avertissement des directeurs", *La Révolution française*, nouv. série 18 (1939) p.102.
[86] Godechot, "L'armée d'Italie", *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 4 (1936): 9-32, here pp.9-10.
[87] Joseph Barthélemy, "Les principes financières de la Révolution française", *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 6 (1937): 5-46, here p.7.
[88] Sagnac, "Preface", *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 7 (1938): v-viii, here p.vii.

"Almost the reverse was true."[89] This was a conversation among unequal partners, whose diverse contributions were accommodated within forums overseen by the French state and under the unifying rubric of French civilization. What held these disparate constituencies together was less shared principles than a set of common enemies. In the desperate political circumstances of the 1930s, the International Institute was willing to entertain a host of dubious alliances within the fragile centre ground. Due to such compromises, the scholarly proceedings at the Sorbonne were marked by tensions in at least four domains.

Firstly, the form of international history practiced by Sagnac remained perfectly compatible with a belief in French exceptionalism. Sagnac expounded the common republican view that French patriotism was simultaneously national and universal, since the defence of France was synonymous with the defence of humanity at large. Honed through the trenchant writings he produced during the First World War- imagined as the latest bout in the long battle between democracy and military despotism- Sagnac extolled universal *civilisation* as the remedy to tribalistic German *Kultur*.[90] The centrality of the concept for French thinkers was famously affirmed by Henri Berr, Lucien Febvre and Marcel Mauss in 1929 at the Centre international de synthèse, and its cultural content and normative power and was debated by linguistics, anthropologists, psychologists, historians and sociologists (such as Norbert Elias) across the following decade.[91] In the vast frescoes he penned for his volumes in the 'Peuples et civilisations' series, Sagnac accorded special importance to the intellectual and moral causes of the French Revolution; his lecture notes return constantly to the "*esprit public*", the "passions", "sentiments" and "effervescence" which had gripped France across the eighteenth century.[92] This sea-change in consciousness had not been generated uniquely within France, but came from dialogue with English and American politics and philosophical ideas. Nonetheless, Sagnac's 'idealist' approach reinforced the belief in France's role as a leader of opinion, which incorporated

[89] Michael Geyer and Johannes Paulmann, "Introdution: The Mechanics of Internationalism" in *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.9.
[90] Sagnac, "Le sens de la guerre mondiale," *Scientia* 14 (1918): 43-52.
[91] Jean-François Bert, "Éléments pour une histoire de la notion de civilisation: la contribution de Norbert Elias," *Vigntième siècle: revue d'histoire* 106, no.2 (2010): 71-80.
[92] AN, AB XIX/3527, "La Révolution française et la morale", dossier 2 and "Cours de 1936-37 sur la Révolution", dossier 3.

and synthesized enlightened thought from the other 'free' nations, fuelling a passionate love of freedom, which was then disseminated through the benevolent channels of cultural imperialism.

Indicative in this regard is Sagnac's close friendship with Ferdinand Brunot, professor and dean of the Faculty of arts and letters at the Sorbonne after 1919. Brunot was an ardent republican, having participated in the Ligue des droits de l'homme and the Alliance française, and served as mayor of the fourteenth arrondissement during the war. He won worldwide acclaim for his eleven-volume landmark survey on the evolution, purification and global diffusion of the French language.[93] The latter parts of this survey, concerning the revolutionary era both inside and beyond France, were written during Brunot's membership of the IIHRF. "I have just skimmed this monument," Sagnac wrote to his friend in 1937. "It is not only history of the language, *stricto sensu*; it is that of the human spirit, and of the French nation at the most critical era of its transformation, and, I dare to say, of its transfiguration." The two volumes of book nine represented "*une oeuvre capitale* on the Revolution" which illuminated the "national regeneration between 1789 and 1814".[94] Brunot's studies of language provided a cogent framework through which to analyse the universality of French culture and to naturalize its global hegemony. As Sagnac wrote to Brunot's widow in 1942, invoking her husband, "we have worked (and we have not given up) to construct a monument to our great French civilization, whose language and literature are the most solid and most beautiful foundations."[95] Whilst Sagnac toiled sincerely to master the geography, history and literature of several continents in his textbooks, he wanted to show that progressive opinion always spoke with a French accent.

Secondly, among the Institute's delegates, it proved very difficult to square the particularity of national histories- Dutch, Belgian, Italian, Irish, Polish- within the framework of *la grande nation*. The experience of invasion by the French armies in the 1790s, however important for the dissemination of rational reforms and civil rights, had also often been resented for bringing conscription, centralization and higher taxes. As Count Louis Voinovitch alleged in his study of

[93] Jean-Claude Chevalier, "F. Brunot (1860-1937): la fabrication d'une mémoire de la langue", *Langages* 28 (1994): 54-68.
[94] Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut, Ms 7840, Sagnac to Brunot, 20 février 1937.
[95] Bibliothèque de l'Institut, Ms 7884, Sagnac to Mme Brunot, 15 juin 1942.

events on the Adriatic coast, the French revolutionaries had simply continued the cynical realpolitik of the old regime. "The revolutionary assembly and the victorious general [Bonaparte] will overwhelm the small nations with taxes, burdens, requisitions, they will annex them by violence, they will injure the rights of neutral powers, they will denounce treaties, they will mock international laws, all the while swearing to respect the liberty and neutrality of peoples."[96] Director of Journal de Geneva, Edouard Chapuisat, tried to have it both ways. He took pride in noting how the uprisings in Swiss cantons were native anticipations of 1789, praised the French armies for helping liberate the Swiss populations from aristocratic government. But he conceded that by perfidiously annexing the country and trying to fashion a single Swiss republic on the French model, the Directory had committed "an error of an historical, geographical and psychological kind."[97]

For jurists and legal scholars, concerned primarily with the elaboration of timeless principles, such messy practical politics were secondary. Mirkine-Guetzévitch insisted repeatedly on the original pacifist intentions of the revolutionaries: they had dreamed of perpetual peace and had renounced wars of aggression in the constitution of 1791. In that sense, they planted the seed that would ripen into the League of Nations and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.[98] But it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Mirkine-Guetzévitch was happier spotting the diffusion of French norms in constitutional documents than reflecting on the concrete and often bloody promises by which these norms had been exported, often at the barrel of a gun. In an incisive article, former left-wing deputy and supporter of the interparliamentary union Étienne Fournol acknowledged that the revolutionaries had mistakenly assumed that their notions of freedom and reason were universal truths that would be shared by the populations they liberated. Through such errors, they both planted the seed of international law, but also stirred up ugly nationalisms, whose dreadful struggle was still "the drama of our era."[99]

[96] Iouis de Voinovitch, "La Révolution française vue de l'Adriatique", *La Révolution française*, nouv. série 12 (1937): 275-304, here p.279.
[97] Édouard Chapuisat, "L'Influence de la Révolution française sur la Suisse," *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 2 (1934): 5-29, here p.6, 29.
[98] See Paul Mantouchet comments on Mirkine-Guétzevitch's course in *La Révolution française* 87.4 (1934), pp.361-62.
[99] Étienne Fournol, "Le caractère intérnational de la Révolution française," *La Révolution française*, nouv. série 7 (1936), p.228

Thirdly, the difficulty of co-ordinating different European histories was further complicated by the non-European aspects too. To achieve its global panorama, the IIHRF drew upon the significant stream of interwar publishing on colonial history.[100] Research here was led not so much by scholars outside Europe- aside from visitors from South America, there were no delegates from even France *outre-mer* at the 1936 international congress- but allies of the French colonial ministry. This meant that celebrating France's achievement in pioneering the abolition of slavery in 1794 co-existed with nostalgia for the extent of French sway over North America. As a student in Paris at the turn-of-the-century, Sagnac had been caught up by the excitement of the colonial adventure, incarnated in figures such as Lyautey, Brazza and Gallieni.[101] A keen supporter of *la mission civilisatrice*, between 1926-29 he had been subsidized by the French foreign ministry to work in the Egyptian University in Cairo founded by King Fouad.[102] An ardent colonialist, Sagnac was both proud of the humanitarianism of eighteenth-century French abolitionists, but he also cursed the over-hasty application of their ideas, since the "immediate assimilation of the colonies to the metropole" was a pipe-dream.[103]

These misgivings about emancipation pervaded the studies of colonial issues commissioned by Sagnac in 1935 for a special issue of the *Cahiers de la Revolution Française*. A member of the Ligue des droits de l'homme, Gaston Martin also was Radical deputy for the Lot-et-Garonne, a senior freemason and the foremost expert on the slave trade in interwar France, especially in relation to Nantes. His essay for Sagnac contains praise for the courage and ingenuity of the French traders, and bitter criticism of the Société des Amis des Noirs campaign group founded in France in 1788. Martin reminded his readers that the campaign against the slave trade was "not born on our soil" but rather was an import from Britain, which had flooded France with the writings of Wilberforce and Clarkson. These philanthropic writings reflected British economic self-interest, since they did not agitate for the ending of slavery as such but only the maritime slave trade- knowing full well that it was France, rather than Britain, that depended on a constant replenishment of slaves for her Caribbean

[100] See Marie-Albanne de Suremain, "Histoire coloniale et/ou histoire de l'Afrique? Historiographies de l'Afrique subsahariennne, XIX-XXIe siècles," in *La Construction du discours colonial: l'empire française aux XIX et XXIe siècles*, eds. Oissila Saaïdia, Laurick Zerbini (Kathala, Paris, 2009): 35-62.
[101] AN, AB/XIX/3525, "Souvenirs du Quartier latin", dossier 1.
[102] See AN, AB/XIX/3525, "Voyage en Egypte", dossier 4.
[103] Sagnac, "Avant-Propos," *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 3 (1935): 1-6, p.4.

possessions. In this way abolitionist thinkers strayed "close to hypocrisy".[104] Paul Roussier, an archivist at the colonial ministry, extolled the wisdom and humanity of officials in the Directory period after 1795, who showed that "the French have always been distinguished by more good will, understanding, humanity, less pride and harshness towards populations in the territories where they are based."[105] While they had proclaimed abolition, officials made sure that this liberty would be deferred until the black populations were ready for it following an extensive programme of education. "The blacks of Saint Domingue are in reality the first natives that the French thought to raise to civilization," boasted Roussier. In its mix of Christian and Republican values, generosity and prudence, "the colonial ideas of the Directory form the link between those of the 18th century and those current in the twentieth."[106] Such equivocal attitudes- simultaneously affirming equality while reintroducing hierarchy- tally with what Laurent Dubois has dubbed a very French strain of "republican racism" and whose logic underpinned the Mandate system.[107]

Fourthly, the interwar years had seen a significant rapprochement between French and American scholarship. From the outset Sagnac had sought funding from American funding bodies like the Rockerfeller Centre.[108] He welcomed the contribution of young American scholars to the journal *La Révolution française*, and reviewed their works, even if he did not always support their approach. For instance, Beatrice Hyslop was chastised for describing the *cahiers de doléances* as exuding a mood of 'nationalism', since this carried unhappy implications of selfish chauvinism, and overlooked the 'miraculous' and sudden way in which the French nation was formed through protest and rebellion in the summer of 1789.[109] Sagnac was an early patron of the *Franco-American Review*, founded in 1936, whose aim again was to mix scholarship with diplomacy. The prospectus stated baldly that "Relations between France and America and the collaboration of the two countries has had an exceptional

[104] Gaston Martin, "La doctrine coloniale de la Fance en 1789," *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 3 (1935): 7-44, here pp.38-40.
[105] Paul Roussier, "L'application des lois de la Révolution aux colonies françaises (1789-1802)," *Cahiers de la Révolution française* 3 (1935): 45-71, p.64.
[106] Roussier, "L'application des lois," p.70.
[107] Laurent Dubois, "Republican Antiracism and Racism: A Carribbean Genealogy," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 18, no.3 (2000): 5-17.
[108] AN, 20010498/105, Sagnac to Tracy Kittredge, "Finances, 1932-48".
[109] Sagnac, "Les cahiers des états généraux d'après les ouvrages récents", *La Révolution française*, nouv. série 12 (1937): 373-78. Beatrice Hyslop's pioneering study of the cahiers de doléances had been strongly influenced by Carlton Hayes, who had insisted that 1789 represented the birth of modern nationalism.

importance for them and for the universe. At the current time, the close Franco-American understanding is one of the surest guarantees of world peace and the intellectual collaboration of both countries is one of the most useful factors for the flourishing of letters, arts and sciences." The review invited submissions related to the "admirable" eighteenth century, and this was reflected in the speciality of its sponsors in American universities, including Louis Gottschalk at Chicago, the literary scholar Gilbert Chinard at Princeton and Hyslop's mentor Carlton Hayes at Columbia. In France, its sponsors numbered some distinguished aristocrats, specialist organizations (including the Society of the Cincinnati and the Franco-American museum at Blérancourt), and Sagnac at the Sorbonne. Directing the ensemble was Bernard Faÿ.[110]

The connection with Faÿ is surprising and troubling. Since 1932 Faÿ was a lecturer at the Collège de France and an extremely well-known French intellectual in America, whose admirers included Carl Becker. His historical publications concerned international freemasonry in the eighteenth century and were given enthusiastic reviews by Sagnac in the pages of *Révolution Française*. After all, there were few topics which demonstrated so clearly that when it came to France, Britain and the United States, their "three histories are only one" and that the eighteenth century was "essentially international."[111] Sagnac tactfully refrained from pointing out his disagreement with the substance of the Faÿ thesis, namely that the masonic lodges incubated a naïve creed of utilitarianism and atheistic individualism that would sap the foundations of the Catholic monarchy. An enemy of democracy, materialism and mass culture, Faÿ was entrenched in Catholic circles; along with members of the Franco-American Review, Faÿ wrote scathing counter-revolutionary tracts in 1939. Although Sagnac would have been revolted by such sentiments, James Harvey is right to point out that "Sagnac's support for the books and international prospects of Faÿ was an important sign that, even in the 1930s, centre-left historians would overlook his conservatism in order to protect the programme of transatlantic *rayonnement*."[112] Under Vichy Faÿ was placed in charge of the Bibliothèque Nationale and used the post to chase

[110] "La Révue Franco-américaine," *La Révolution française*, nouv. série 8 (1936): 379-81, here pp.379-80.
[111] Sagnac review of "La Franc-Maçonnerie et la revolution du XVIIIe siècle," *La Révolution française* (1938), p.197.
[112] Harvey, "Conservative Crossings: Bernard Faÿ and the Rise of American Studies in Third Republic France," *Historical Reflections* 36.1 (2010):95-124, here p.112.

freemasons and Jews out of their posts, leading to at least one thousand deportations and deaths. Yet in a further sign of reactionary internationalism, it was thanks to his friendship with Gertrude Stein and her partner, Alice B. Toklas, that Fäy was secretly smuggled out of France in 1951, evading the sentence of life imprisonment for these crimes.[113]

Philippe Sagnac and Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch at the Sorbonne deserve the credit for first internationalising the study of the Revolution. This meant not simply creating and mobilising scholarly networks across Europe and America; it also meant making scholarship answer questions posed by the disintegration of geopolitical security. The late eighteenth century was identified as a rallying-point for progressive opinion, a mirror onto modern forms of cosmopolitan exchange and the cradle of "a new religion...the religion of human rights".[114] The apex of this vision came with the celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary in 1939, with plans for an exhibition co-ordinated by Herriot and fellow Society members Sagnac, Mirkine-Guetzévitch, Pierre Caron, Henri de Montfort and André Pierre. "This exhibition will not be limited to the history of France. Its principal aim will be to show the influence of French liberty on the entire world, in Europe and in America. The participation of several European and American states is expected."[115] Hopes for opening a new museum of the revolution were dashed, but the Society took a leading role in holding educational events in the Sorbonne throughout 1939 and continued its fortnightly conference programme, held symbolically in the premises of the Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle in the Palais-Royal.[116]

Yet if 1789 was proclaimed to be the shared heritage of all peoples, this was not a heritage shared out equally between France, Europe and the world. An analysis of the publications coming out of the Sorbonne during the 1930s demonstrates the internal frictions between French exceptionalism and the European family of nations. If international peace was affirmed, then so was the colonial adventure; if scholarship looked west across the Atlantic, then not all this scholarship was republican in sentiment,

[113] Ibid., p.96.
[114] Sagnac, "150e anniversaire de la Révolution," in *Manuel general de l'instruction primaire*, 10 juin 1939.
[115] "Le 150e anniversaire de la Révolution française," *La Révolution française*, nouv. série 6 (1936): 186-87, here p.186. For the abortive hopes for a new museum, see Ory, *Une nation pour mémoire*, p.87.
[116] Sagnac, "La cent-cinquième anniversaire de la Révolution française", *La Révolution française*, nouv. série 17 (1939), p.3, 69.

and the willingness to reach out to Fäy demonstrated the paucity of Sagnac's political options. Hostile to Marxism and critical of the Popular Front, Sagnac built a deliberately eclectic coalition out of the remaining Radical, moderate and conservative camps.[117] Unsurprisingly perhaps, several stalwarts of the IIHRF would emerge as collaborators after 1940, including the historian Octave Aubry (who served under Faÿ on the Conseil du livre) and Joseph Barthélemy, law professor at the Sorbonne who became minister of justice under Vichy.[118] The Institute's compromised politics contributed to its intellectual inconsistencies, as captured in Herriot's manifesto published for the 1939 commemorations, *Aux Sources de la Liberté*. Citing Voltaire, Montesquieu, Jefferson and Paine, Herriot stressed the "interpenetration of ideas which is always found at the origin of the democratic credo and imposes on us, we English, Americans, French, the duty to defend it together."[119] Magna Carta, Habeas Corpus, the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of Man- this was a pot-pourri of quite distinct articulations of freedom, flattened out and pressed into a homogeneous tradition out of geopolitical emergency. Herriot's intent to flatter an Anglophone audience was confirmed by its rapid translation in a fresh illustrated edition for New York.[120] This reorientation from affirming European solidarities to making transatlantic overtures was prophetic of the future direction of the Société de l'histoire de la Révolution Française as well.

## EXILE AND THE NEW UNIVERSALISM

The outbreak of war put an end to the activities of Sagnac and his Institute. Teaching and publishing on the subject of the French Revolution was heavily censored in occupied France.[121] Lefebvre noted

[117] For Sagnac, the Popular Front represented: "Une révolution sociale, tantôt lourde, tantôt presque réalisée, soutenue par des gouvernements de vengeance, faisant de la révol. leur programme même, et incapables d'établir l'ordre, même de faire éxécuter ses propres instructions et ses entreprises mêmes (Exposition)". AN, AB/XIX/3532, "La formation de la nation française", dossier 1.
[118] Martine Poullain, *Livres pillés, lectures surveillées: les bibliothèques sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), p.160, 498 n.8; Gilles Martinez, "Joseph Barthélemy et la crise de la democratie liberale," *Vingtième siècle: revue d'histoire* 59 (1998): 28-47.
[119] Édouard Herriot, *Aux Sources de la liberté* (Paris: Galllimard, 1939), p.117.
[120] Herriot, *The Well-Springs of Liberty* trans. Richard Duffy (New York, 1939).
[121] In 1917 Sagnac had written *Le Rhin français pendant la Révolution et l'Empire*, which was awarded the Prix Thérouanne by the Institut; it was placed on the 'Otto list'and removed from booksellers in 1940. AN, AB/XIX/3525, dossier 1.

sadly in December 1941 that the Sorbonne had suspended its courses, no doctoral thesis had been presented, and no foreign students had been registered.[122] Deprived of his salary, Lefebvre nonetheless continued to fulfill the duties of his professorship, lest it be given instead to one of the "partisans" of "treason".[123] Whilst Sagnac stayed in provincial obscurity near Luynes, several of his associates from the IIHRF managed to escape the country and head to America. They were lucky enough to find a warm welcome at the New School in New York, an institution which modelled itself on the London School of Economics and whose energetic director Alvin Johnston had already found passports and academic positions for large numbers of exiled intellectuals from Weimar Germany. It was under the auspices of the New School that the École Libre des Hautes Études was founded in February 1942, whose Gaullist sympathies (articulated through the group France Forever) sought to affirm the persistence of French scholarship and civilized values in exile.[124] Mirkine-Guetzévitch re-grouped the scattered membership. "It is at the moment when the ideas, studies, memories even of the Great Revolution are the object of systematic denigration of all kinds on the part of the Germans and the ministers of Pétain, that another Society of the History of the French Revolution comes to light, in the spring of 1942, on the free soil of America."[125] Mirkine-Guetzévitch wrote to Jacques Maritain that over one hundred people attended the first meeting of the new Society on 28th April 1942, rejoicing at the "zeal of the young, the goodwill and collaboration of American colleagues."[126]

The composition of the Society was obviously changed by the flight across the oceans, although the eclecticism of pre-war membership and methods eased the regrouping process. The presidency was given to venerable art historian Henri Focillon, head of the École Libre and participant in the 1939

[122] Georges Lefebvre, "Rapport sur l'activité d'Institut d'histoire de la Révolution française," 16 décembre 1941, in AN 20010498/105.
[123] James Friguglietti, "La correspondance de Georges Lefevre avec l'historien Gordon H. MacNeil (1940-1954)," *AHRF* 358 (2009): 133-42, here p.136.
[124] The founding members of the ELHE were Jacques Maritain, Henri Focillon, Alexandre Koyré, Gustave Cohen, Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch, later joined by Jean Perrin. Diane Dosso, "La France libre et la politique de recherché? New York, 1941-44," in *Le gouvernment de la recherche: La Découvrte 'Recherches'*, eds. Vincent Duclert, Alain Chatriot (2006): 115-31, here pp.127-28.
[125] Mirkine-Guétzevitch, "Nos cahiers," p.15.
[126] François Chaubet and Emmanuelle Loyer, "L'école libre des hautes études de New York: exil et résistance intellectuelle (1942-46)," *Revue historique* 302 (2000): 939-72, here p.953, n.41.

commemorations.[127] The presence of art history was reinforced through Georges Wildenstein, editor of Gazette des Beaux-Arts, and a famous collector and picture dealer. He offered his gallery for an exhibition in 1943 of over four hundred artefacts and portraits from the revolutionary era loaned from public and private collections.[128] The Society focussed on similar morale-building social gatherings, organizing thanks to the tireless energy of Mirkine-Guetzévitch a host of lecture courses at the École Libre, conferences, banquets and tearful public renditions of the Marseillaise. There was to be "no dogma or restrictions" on new lines of research.[129] The social activities created important room for female participation. Beatrice Hyslop was a secretary for the Society of the History of the French Revolution in New York, and had a hand in organizing the Wildenstein show.[130] Frances Childs, historian of French émigrés in the United States, also helped out with the exhibition, while the portentously named *deleguée générale adjointe* to the Society was Sarah Lorgue, teacher from the local James Monroe high school, and a campaigner for better classroom teaching of 1789.[131]

If the revolutionary era contained warning about the descent onto dictatorship, it also furnished French and American scholars with a genealogy of freedom they could rally behind. Mirkine-Guetzévitch stressed that the struggle in 1942 descended directly from 1789; "the machine-gun has replaced the *pique des patriotes* but we are fighting today for the same ideas."[132] In France Sagnac completed his monumental study on the end of the old regime and the American Revolution in 1941, for which he won the Prix Gobert from the Académie Française. [133] He wrote it with urgency, devoid of resources in his provincial retreat ("*Tours n'a presque rien*," he grumbled in one letter).[134] Georges Duhamel, speaking on behalf of the Académie judges, said the book asked boldly, "Can we speak of

[127] See Henri Focillon, "L'art et la Révolution," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 128 (1939): 161-71.
[128] *The French Revolution, A Loan Exhibition for the Benefit of the Société d'histoire de la Révolution française* (William Bradford Press, New York, 1943).
[129] Ben D'Arlon, "The Society for the History of the French Revolution," *The French Review* 16, no.6 (1943): 501-503, here p.502.
[130] Hyslop, "Historical publication since 1939 on the French Revolution," *Journal of Modern History* 203 (1948): 232-250, here p.235.
[131] Mirkine-Guétzevitch, "Nos cahiers," p.16; 'Chroniques", *Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française* 1 (1946): 208-215, here p.215.
[132] Cited in Chaubet and Loyer, "L'école libre", p.962.
[133] Sagnac, *La fin de l'ancien regime et la Révolution américaine* (1763-1789) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941).
[134] Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne, Ms 2030, Sagnac to unnamed editor, 19 mai 1941. f.86-87.

the world without speaking of France, and can we in truth, speak of France without speaking of the whole world?" He praised Sagnac's account of eighteenth-century global civilization in its literary and moral aspects and applauded his insight that "a poem" could exercise just as much influence as a "war machine" on the "destiny of a nation."[135] The work was also eagerly received in the United States. In 1948 Louis Gottschalk hailed Sagnac's transatlantic focus on 1776 and 1789 as "his greatest contribution to historiography". This field of research appeared highly promising for both Europeans and Americans, and one sure "to receive greater and greater emphasis in their work for some time to come."[136] In the same year Beatrice Hyslop, reviewing the state of eighteenth-century studies, underlined how far "world events" had pushed historians such as Sagnac and Lefebvre to study "mutual influences in the history of the three democratic countries". American historians should take note to situate their own revolution "with a world focus in proper perspective."[137]

The implications of this transatlantic turn can be seen clearly in the reprised *Cahiers de la Révolution française* published in 1946. In the preface Sagnac and Mirkine-Guetzévitch proclaimed once again that 1789 was an international event, which needed to be studied with an extended chronology and through multi-disciplinary and multi-national approaches to exhibit "the spiritual synthesis of the great revolutionary era". The roll-call of honorary members for the re-launched Société d'histoire de la Révolution française included the leading Francophile scholars in America (such as Louis Gottschalk, Leo Gershoy and Gilbert Chinard), contributors from 1930s Paris (such as Henri de Montfort and Gaston Martin) alongside a smattering of diplomats, former ministers, émigré intellectuals from Europe and Latin America, and progressive thinkers, including Roman Jakobsen, Jan Masaryk, Harold Laski and Claude Lévi-Strauss.[138] The cover was designed by Jean Carlu, the artist who had designed the panorama of Franco-American friendship for New York World's Fair in

[135] *Académie française: séance annuelle du jeudi 17 décembre 1942, présidé par Georges Duhamel* (Firmin-Didot, Paris, 1942), pp.22-23.
[136] Louis Gottschalk, "Philippe Sagnac and the Causes of the French Revolution," *Journal of Modern History* 20, no.2 (1948): 137-48, here p.148.
[137] Beatrice Hyslop, "Review- La Formation de la société française modern by Philippe Sagnac; La fin de l'ancien régime et la révolution américaine (1763-89)," *William and Mary Quarterly* 5.4 (1948): 590-93, here p.591, 593.
[138] The 'comité directeur' of the Society included in 1946 Crane Brinton, Jacques Barzun, Frances Childes, Leo Gershoy, Louis Gottschalk, Henri Grégoire, William Halperin, Roman Jakobson, Harold Laski, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jan Masaryk, Alfredo Mendizabal, Henri Peyre, Dorothy Thompson, Lionello Venturi, George Verdansky.

1939.[139] It is evident that what had been a broad conversation about the effects of the Revolution before the war had narrowed into a two-way paean of praise. Britain was barely mentioned in the resurrected *Cahiers*, nor is the rest of Europe, aside from Germany, demonized as a barbaric country which since the eighteenth century had already turned its back on the Enlightenment.[140]

Instead the reborn *Cahiers* was full of ecstatic affirmations of shared Franco-American destiny. For the meeting to commemorate the liberation in 1945, a large number of messages poured in to commend the work of the Society in propagating the common origins of the two republics, including from the French ambassador to the United States Henri Bonnet and the mayor of New York, Fiorello La Guardia. [141] On Bastille Day 1945 drama students from New York high schools gave the US première of selected scenes from Romain Rolland's *Quatorze Juillet*. In the effusive tribute of Alvin Johnston, head of the New School:

> You who lived under the benign sky of France, do you always realize what Bastille Day means not only for France but for the world? Out of Bastille Day came, for the first time in the hundreds of millennia of mankind, the principle that all men are by nature free, though in chains, and that the great French nation would consecrate itself to the breaking of the chains. The storming of the Bastille was a symbol, and a promise, that the generous spirit of France would deploy itself in the fight for universal liberty.[142]

Such emotional gatherings succeeded in hammering home the message that France and America had led the world in the fight for liberal democracy. Sagnac took care to point out that no part of the French Revolution would have endorsed communism, for the Jacobins were believers in individual rights who recognized that "absolute equality" was a destructive phantom.[143] Long before Palmer and Godechot, Alvin Johnston insisted that "We must recognize the two revolutions as one, arising out of

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[139] Édouard Reitmann, "Une exposition française aux États-Unis," *Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française* 1 (1946): 216-19, here p.216.
[140] Paul Schrecker, "La République des lettres et son ennemi alllemand," *Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française* 1 (1946): 123-33.
[141] "Chroniques", *Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française* 1 (1946), p.210.
[142] Ibid, p.212.
[143] Sagnac "La Révolution et sa conception de la propriété (1789-1804')," *Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française* 1 (1946), pp.56-57.

the same general fund of political unrest, having at the outset the same objective, constitutional improvement within the existing monarchical framework." Although revolutionary fervour bubbled up in "all western Europe", America's place on the "periphery" of the world system ensured that injustices were perceived with extra sharpness.[144] Through these exchanges we can see French and American intellectuals dressing their histories in colours congenial to their interlocutors. According to Emmanuelle Loyer, the exile years prepared the way for a mutual convergence towards a universalist discourse of 'westernization', based on the fusion of distinct national and European narratives.[145] One review praised the resurrected *Cahiers* from 1946 for showing "the importance of the liberal philosophy of the 18th century, on which our era is, and must remain, founded."[146]

In 1949, after a ten years' interval, the Society reconvened in Paris in a defiant mood: "During the occupation, the Germans confiscated our publications and even prohibited the Society. We celebrate its resurrection, and recommence our scientific work....."[147] Yet despite the high hopes of long-term collaboration with American colleagues, there was to be no second issue of the *Cahiers*, nor any new issue of *La Révolution française*. Indeed, it only reappeared again in 1955, in a revealingly backward-looking homage to Alphonse Aulard. On the French side, the problems were partly due to personnel. Many of the older members had died during the war years, some in tragic circumstances, while others had been scattered abroad.[148] The death in swift succession of Sagnac in 1954 and Mirkine-Guetzévitch in 1955 deprived the Society of its chief architects and organizers. Yet even without those losses, the Society was losing its rationale. Mirkine-Guetzévitch, who had remained in New York after 1945, was no longer wrestling with European constitutions, although he was perturbed by the "neo-absolutism" found in the people's democracies of Eastern Europe. Instead he was reflecting on the connections between the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the new Declaration on Human

[144] Alvin Johnson, "One Revolution, American and French," *Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française* 1 (1946): 20-23, here pp.20-21.
[145] Emmanuelle Loyer, *Paris à New York: intellectuelles et artistes français en exil 1940-1947* (Paris: Grasset, 2005).
[146] Paul Langellier, "Review- Cahiers de la Révolution Française", *The French Review* 20.6 (1947): 492.
[147] AN, 20010498/105, Mirkine-Guetzévitch to Jean Sarrailh, 12 juillet 1949.
[148] Among those members of the Society or the Institut International who died in the war years include Charles Seignobos, Henri Focillon, Léon Cahen, Sébastien Charléty, Étienne Fournol, Nicolas Politis, Jacques Ancel (legatee of Aulard, deported and murdered as Jewish) Marceli Handelsman (murdered in 1945).

Rights proclaimed by the United Nations in 1948.[149] The radical universality of the document accorded well with Mirkine's consciousness of being at once a "Jew, Russian and French".[150]

Relocation to New York spurred his search for a "synthesis of the great epoch of the American and French Revolution" and the "modern conceptions of liberty" which the Allies sought to roll out round the world. In 1943 Mirkine-Guetzévitch saw the United Nations as the logical inheritor of 1776 and 1789, what he dubbed "the Revolution of the Declaration of Rights" which had made the name of France forever "sacred".[151] Hence his commitment to revolutionary nationalism as a sublime, emancipatory force was accommodated and fulfilled within the UN project for a Universal Declaration.[152] In light of Samuel Moyn's work on the contribution of religion to early human rights discourse, it is telling that obituaries stressed Mirkine-Guetzévitch's status as a "spiritual leader" and "one of the blessed peace makers", who was possessed of a "mystic faith in God and a rational faith in mankind." His worldview was indebted to Personalism, even Christian existentialism: "He was a revolutionary who believed that the present state of the world called for a moral and spiritual revolution, revolution in the name of personality, of man, of every single person."[153] Whilst religion smoothed his path, Mirkine-Guetzévitch's journey towards United Nations universalism had several imitators among Sagnac's circle. Louis Gottschalk was attracted towards the work of UNESCO and the challenge of writing a history which broke from Eurocentric assumptions to "present a view of world evolution which is equally acceptable to persons of all nations, races and religions."[154] Both men had clearly been attracted towards a more global perspective firstly through their love for 1789.

[149] Boris Mirkine-Guétzevitch, "Quelques remarques sur les déclarations des droits américaines et françaises," *Études philosophiques* 7 (1952): 96-109, here p.108.
[150] George Bourgin, "Nos deuils," *Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française: Alphonse Aulard* (1955): 3-7, here p.7.
[151] Mirkine-Guetzévitch, "Introduction" in *The French Revolution: A Loan Exhibition*: 3-6, here p.4, 6.
[152] Within the 1948 Declaration the nation-state was still viewed as "a highly idealistic vehicle of cosmopolitan humanity enjoying a modular nationalism with no provision for superordinate constraint." Samuel Moyn, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 in the History of Cosmopolitanism," *Critical Inquiry* 40, no.4 (2014): 365-84, here p.379.
[153] See the tribute by Dr Laszlo Hamori from the UN Secretariat: *In memory of our esteemed colleagues Frédéric R. Coudert (1871-1955) Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch (1892-1955)* (New York: Consular Law Society, 1955). See also Moyn, *Christian Human Ri*ghts (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).
[154] He was the editor of the fourth volume in the UNESCO series entitled Foundation of the Modern World 1300-1775, published in 1969. R.R. Palmer, "Nécrologie- Louis Gottschalk," *AHRF* 226 (1976): 665-67, here p.666. On UNESCO's encouragement of world history, see Paul Betts, "Humanity's New Heritage: UNESCO and the Rewriting of World History," *Past & Present* 228, no.1 (2015): 249-85.

This change in scale, however, arguably rendered the claims for the special French origins of rights discourse less relevant.

Its' wartime functions fulfilled, the Society appeared far more as a diplomatic outfit and a social club than a centre for serious research. Robert Palmer, aware of its activities, made clear his misgivings in a review from 1947. While he admired the re-appearance of the *Cahiers* as a "triumph over great difficulties by their moving spirit, Mr Mirkine-Guetzévitch," Palmer did not think it was helpful to view nearly "all developments of the last three hundred years as aspects of the Revolution". Furthermore, the Society now only represented "a fraction" of the relevant scholars, and those looking for real research would do better to look to Georges Lefebvre and the re-founded *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*. For after all:

> It may be felt that the aim of the *Cahiers* is not so much scholarship as the bringing together of scholars; the cultivation of Franco-American good-will; the joint treatment of history, philosophy, literature, and the arts; and the presentation of those features of the French and American revolutions which they had in common and which are most acceptable to friends of democracy today.

Palmer rounded off this review by adding "That these are all aims deserving of support."[155] Although condescending in his judgements, Palmer was right. The very facets that made the Society adaptable and useful for French morale- such as its eclectic personnel and calendar of sociability- made it seem superfluous when hostilities were over and the real business of historical research recommenced. The strategic, amateur mode of sociability, in which discussion was deliberately extended beyond university institutions to commnity well-wishers, was severed from robust scientific inquiry.

At this crucial juncture American historians were also discovering French scholarship for themselves, outside of the mediation of Sagnac and his displaced Society. The war was formative in prompting

[155] Palmer, "Review- Cahiers d'histoire de la Révolution française," *Journal of Modern History* 19, no.2 (1947): 161-62.

many rising American scholars to acquire a deeper first-hand knowledge of Europe.[156] Due to poor eyesight, Palmer stayed in Washington D.C and was assigned to the historical section of the Army Ground Forces, while also working in intelligence. Louis Gottschalk was active in the secret 'Committee of Historians to Analyze and Appraise Current Conditions and Prospective Developments in Germany'.[157] Crane Brinton went to London to head the OSS's European organisation and travelled round Europe after the Liberation writing jittery letters about possible communist insurrections and de Gaulle as a crypto-fascist. Rising from only a marginal position in in the 1920s, American universities began to expand rapidly after the Second World War and so did the number of American historians of France. The creation of the Society for French Historical Studies, co-founded by Beatrice Hyslop, consecrated this development in 1955. It took over the funds from a previous, defunct Société d'histoire de France which had been set up by Mirkine-Guetzévtich but which apparently never held a single event. Among early supporters of the FHS were several survivors from Sagnac's society, including Gilbert Chinard, Frances Childs and Robert Valeur.[158] In 1960 the FHS co-organized a conference with the Société d'histoire moderne in Paris on Franco-American themes, including one session on 'The French Revolution, Atlantic or Western?' featuring Palmer and Godechot.[159]

The priority for Hyslop was resuming links with the coterie of Marxist scholars in the Society of Robespierrist Studies. The war years had seen their activities discontinued or forced underground, in what represented a terrible physical and moral ordeal.[160] At the end of 1943 Lefebvre learned that his brother Théodore, a geography professor, had been arrested by the Gestapo for his links with resistance groups and was beheaded by axe in Wolfenbüttel. After the Liberation he remained full of

[156] Among those wartime visitors to France included the scholars Gordon Wright, H Stuart Hughes, Laurence Wylie, David Pinkney and Arno J Mayer. Richard Kuisel, "American Historians in Search of France: Perceptions and Misperceptions," *French Historical Studies* 19.2 (1995): 307-19, here pp.308-309; Jeremy Popkin, "Made in the USA: Les historiens français d'Outre-Atlantique et leur histoire," *Revue d'histoire modern et contemporaine* 40, no.2 (1993), 303-320, here pp.311-312; Edward Berenson and Nancy Green, 'The Society for French Historical Studies: the Early Years," *French Historical Studies* 28.4 (2005): 579-600, here pp.585-89.

[157] Edoardo Tortarolo, "Eighteenth-century Atlantic History Old and New," *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008): 369-74, here p.370.

[158] Berenson and Green, "The Society for French Historical Studies," pp.581-82.

[159] Other participants on Franco-American themes included Réné Rémond and Durand Echeverria. Berenson and Green, "Quand l'Oncle Sam ausculte l'Hexagone: les historiens américains et l'histoire de la France," *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire* 88 (2005): 121-31, here p.123.

[160] See the moving article by Mazauric, "Les chausées sont désertes, plus de passants sur les chemins (Esaïe 33.8). La SER dans la tourmente: 1940-1945," *AHRF* 353 (2008): 169-207.

hatred for collaborators and refused to sit on any committees with those he referred to as those "Messieurs who killed my brother". The Robespierristes were reassembled on 21st January 1945- chosen as the anniversary of the execution of Louis XVI- although several members had fallen fighting against Nazism. These sufferings heightened the stature of these historians in the eyes of their American visitors. Palmer won the gratitude of Lefebvre after sending him food parcels and eagerly joined the new Society in 1945.[161] Hyslop described Lefebvre as a man of unimpeachable, incorruptible virtue, like Robespierre, and praised the role of historians in keeping the values of liberty, equality and fraternity alive at this impasse. [162] Gershoy met him for the first time at the start of 1945, and was struck by his sincere regret that "French scholars had been cut off from the work of their foreign colleagues since the start of the war."[163]

It would be mistaken, then, to imagine Lefebvre as hostile to the international dimension of 1789. Although Lefebvre symbolically retired in 1946, ceding the presidency of the IHRF to his replacement at the Sorbonne, Marcel Dunan, he continued to immerse himself on research on the Revolution conducted in several languages and welcomed scholars from many nations in his modest home at Boulogne-Billaincourt. These included a famous contingent of English social historians (Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, Richard Cobb, Norman Hampson), as well Japanese scholars who came to seek his advice on comparisons between their own modernization programme and the redistribution of lands to the peasantry in the 1790s.[164] The number of foreign members in the Society of Robespierristes soared after the war.[165] It was at this time that Lefebvre began revising the first and final parts of the survey volume on the French Revolution that he had been originally commissioned to write by Sagnac in 1930, but now in his capacity as sole author. Mindful of Sagnac's example, he

[161] Friguglietti, "R.R. Palmer," p.342.
[162] Hyslop, "Historical publication," p.250.
[163] Leo Gershoy, Hyslop and Palmer, "Georges Lefebvre vu par les historiens des États-Unis," *AHRF* 159 (1960): 103-08, here p.104.
[164] Godechot, *Un jury*, pp.344-49; Marc Bouloiseau, "Présence de Georges Lefebvre," *AHRF* 198 (1969): 557-565, here pp.561-62; Kohachirō Takahashi, Tadami Chizuka, "Georges Lefebvre et les historiens japonais," *AHRF* 159 (1960): 117-25.
[165] Of 487 members of the Société des Études Robespierristes in 1957, 90 came from Paris, 176 from French départements, 15 from England, 56 from the United States, 11 from Germany, 11 from Italy, 18 from Central Europe, 9 from Switzerland, 26 from Japan, 3 from Latin America and 3 from China. See Maurice Dommanget, "La Société et les Annales. Cinquante ans d'histoire (1908-1958)," *AHRF* 152 (1958): 6-27, here p.26.

further entrenched the discussion of its European and global significance.[166] He confided in a letter to Sagnac how many French historians initially objected to this approach: "At the time of the first edition, Gaston Martin had cried out: So many pages on Poland! And only a few lines on the 14th July!" Yet with Sagnac's encouragement, he persevered, even if publishers forbade the volume growing to the size it deserved. "Placing the Revolution in the perspective of human history, with interaction of all factors, is going to offend tradition. But I am doing my bit."[167]

This engagement with foreign scholars and debt to Sagnac's example, however, did not diminish Lefebvre's belief in the primacy of the French Revolution above all other political transformations- an identification with the Jacobin tradition which had been intensified during the depths of the Occupation. Cobb depicted Lefebvre as a man allergic to cosmopolitanism, but rather possessed by "narrow, rigid, unimaginative petit-bourgeois nationalism."[168] This is unfair, as Lefebvre saluted 1789 as an event which created hopes and aspirations that traversed national divides. If in the late eighteenth century the "greater part of the contemporary humanity was unaware of the flame that had been kindled in a small area of the world, or else did not feel its heat," this would change as that fire spread to illuminate the non-European empires too in Asia and in Africa. Not only did Lefebvre downplay Sagnac's emphasis on ideas and sentiments to stress the role of materialist factors; he also ditched Sagnac's colonialist paternalism to identify anti-colonial nationalists as the direct inheritors of 1789. In this revised narrative, the legacies of the French Revolution were still being realized in the wave of sovereign states carved out of the ruin of empires in aftermath of the Second World War. "The unity of the world is beginning to be realized in our time; only when it is achieved will a truly universal history begin."[169] His brand of 'universal history' combined an exceptionalist reading of the French path to political modernity with a recogniton that the transformations wrought by capitalism, nationalism and class-struggle were world-wide processes, which ramified far beyond the Atlantic

[166] Jacques Godechot, "Review- La Révolution Française T.XIII de Peuples et Civilizations par G. Lefebvre," *Revue historique* 210 (1953):146-48.
[167] AN, AB/XIX/3525, dossier 2, Lefebvre to Sagnac, 6 mai 1951.
[168] Richard Cobb, *A Second Identity: Essays on France and French History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.91.
[169] Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution: From its Origins to 1793* trans. Elizabeth Moss Evanson (London: Routledge, 1962), p.xviii

rim. Thoroughly persuaded by Charles Beard's economic analysis of the US Constitution, Lefebvre doubted whether it was appropriate to view 1776 as a social revolution at all.[170]

Scholarly approaches to framing the age of revolutions further fragmented under the pressure of anti-colonial critique.[171] C.L.R James spent six months in Paris between 1933 and 1934 and visited several times again over the next four years, consulting the archives, attending Lefebvre's lectures at the Sorbonne (as organised by Sagnac) and meeting Pan-African activists, all of which fed into his seminal 1938 study of the Haitian Revolution, *Black Jacobins*. The book was translated into French by a Trotskyist friend Pierre Naville in 1949, and through this translation, reached readers in Haiti too.[172] The genesis of the book points to an alternative mode of interwar, internationalist networking from that organised by the IIHRF, and one that would reject the paternalism inherent to Sagnac's concept of civilisation to refashion the radical, egalitarian message of the 1790s. Decolonisation carried crucial implications for how the arc of progress was conceptualised by historians, although even self-consciously progressive journals such as the *Annales* recycled imperialist stereotypes about East and West well into the 1950s.[173] Acutely sensitive to historical parallels, Lefevre followed the colonial crises of the Fourth Republic with keen interest, and argued in 1948 the central issue of the age was the pursuit of equality within and between the world's nation-states; Godechot, meanwhile, unsettled some of his American friends through his robust defence of the legitimacy of French rule in Algeria.[174] The break-up of the European empires and the discredit of the European state-system convinced some observers that 1789 was now irrelevant for understanding the contemporary world. "Is the French Revolution still worth talking about?" asked Pieter Geyl, anxiously, in 1955. "Do our traditions and ingrained beliefs no longer count because we have lost our grip on Asia and on

[170] James Friguglietti, "La correspondance de Georges Lefebvre avec Robert R. Palmer (1948-1959)," *AHRF* 358 (2009): 93-131, here p.122

[171] For tantalising reflections on the French Revolution itself as a war of independence, see Pierre Serna, "Every Revolution Is a War of Independence" in *The French Revolution in Global Perspective*, pp.165-182.

[172] Christian Høgsbjerg, "Globalising the Haitian Revolution in Black Paris: C.L.R. James, Metropolitan Anti-imperialism in Interwar France and the Writing of *The Black Jacobins*" (forthcoming article); Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, pp.243-44.

[173] Carole Paligot, "Les Annales de Lucien Febvre à Fernand Braudel: entre épopée coloniale et opposition occident/orient," *French Historical Studies* 32, no.1 (2009): 121-144.

[174] Georges Lefebvre, "La Révolution française dans le monde", *Annales: Histoire, sciences sociales* 3, no.3 (1948): 257-66, here p.266; Berenson and Green, "The Society for French Historical Studies", p.597; Berenson and Green, 'Quand l'Oncle Sam", p.127.

Africa?"[175] Geyl's candid questions suggest how the demise of the international order challenged liberal, humanist scholarship to rethink its grand narratives about the roads to emancipation.

By the 1950s there were hence several visions of supra-national history available, built around different organizing matrices ('civilisation', 'liberty', 'democracy') and contrasting geographies. The 'international' history pursued at the IIHRF documented the relations between the European nation-states, along with their colonial dependencies, in hierarchical terms; the growing 'transatlantic' current had foregrounded the transmission of freedom within the northern part of the western hemisphere; the Marxist espoused a universal history, identifying contradictory social processes enacted on a planetary scale (even if revolutionary France remained their decisive manifestation); meanwhile, some nascent strands of world history dared to relativise and contest the centrality of the European experience as foundational. The unpopularity and embarrassment of the Atlantic Revolution thesis in 1955 came from the fragile amalgam of divergent intellectual inheritances, as the two authors proposed a model at once politico-intellectual and socio-economic, idealistic and structuralist, extra-European and Eurocentric. Rather than thinking of the ill-fated Rome conference as an abortive prefiguration of today's global scholarship, it more plausibly represents a hangover from and adaptation of an earlier flurry of interwar internationalism. Godechot had written for Sagnac in the *Cahiers de la Révolution française* and Palmer was aware of the activities of the Société in exile. If the IIHRF had celebrated the special destiny of France, the forced relocation to the United States after 1940 encouraged the interweaving of national mythologies on a grander scale, producing what Pierre Bourdieu dubbed "two imperialisms of the universal".[176] In diplomatic terms, the solidarity of the sister republics was short-lived, but it did strengthen the case for framing the respective revolutions in comparative or trans-Atlantic terms. Hyslop commended her peers to investigate the *Cahiers* published by Sagnac in the 1930s, whose "breadth of vision", clarity and usefulness should be "an inspiration to young American historians." [177] By the 1950s, however, whilst this broader geography

[175] Pieter Geyl, *Encounters in History* (London: Collins, 1963), pp.115-16.
[176] Pierre Bourdieu, "Deux universalismes de l'universel," in *L'Amérique des français*, eds. Christine Faure and Tom Bishop (Paris: Éditions F. Bourin, 1992): 149-55.
[177] Hyslop, "Recent Work on the French Revolution," *American Historical Review* 47, no.3 (1942): 488-517, p.514.

was retained, the broad coalition of 'international' history had splintered into competing and incommensurable visions of global development, and the celebratory tone and politico-cultural focus favoured by the IIHRF had been supplanted by alternative, materialist methods.

The elements of scholarship at the IIHRF that made it diplomatically expedient and morally edifying weakened its status as social science. Lefebvre accurately summarized Sagnac's objective in his later writings as "a conscious effort to raise himself up, above events, to the history of civilization."[178] A strongly idealist current ran through his writing, which gave primacy to the power of ideas in reforming France and the wider world. In his (unsuccessful) application to the Académie française in 1946, Sagnac claimed that for fifty years he had produced not just diligent works of "analysis" but works of "synthesis", which gave primacy to "the ideas and sentiments of human societies and the effort to civilize a nations, in particular that [carried out] by the French nation."[179] Even his closest American allies, such as Gottschalk, felt uncomfortable with this fondness for synthetic abstraction, and the wrong-headed belief that ideas were causes, rather than effects, of human experience. What the French deputies borrowed from America in 1789 was not a set of animating principles but factual proof that a rupture in the social order could be achieved. Moreover, Gottschalk was a little upset to find Sagnac's vision of civilization often lapsing into "old fashioned racialism".[180] Judging from the surviving manuscripts, Gottschalk would not have approved of Sagnac's projected final work on nineteenth-century historiography of the revolution. Through re-reading Michelet, Tocqueville, Taine and Fustel de Coulanges, it seems Sagnac rediscovered their obsession with the dynamic psychological and racial components of French national character.[181]

The attempt to rethink 1789 in an international or global perspective was therefore an interwar obsession that changed its geography and its meanings in accord with political circumstances. The diversity of approaches fostered by Sagnac and Mirkine-Guetzévitch ensured that their contribution was intellectually far-sighted but also struggled to put down firm roots. In hindisght, the eclecticism

[178] Lefebvre, "Nécrologie," p.181.
[179] Sagnac lost the election to Herriot. See AN AB/XIX/3525, dossier 1.
[180] Gottschalk, "Philippe Sagnac," p.145, 147, 148.
[181] See "Michelet" and "Fustel", AN, AB/XIX/3526, dossier 1; AN, AB/XIX/3530, "Comment peut-on écrire l'histoire de la Révolution?" in dossier 4.

of perspectives encouraged during the 1930s appears remarkably fruitful. Auditors at the Sorbonne in February 1939 could hear Lefebvre, Lucien Febvre, Réné Cassin and Maurice Halbwachs debate the transformation of the sciences during the French Revolution.[182] In July that year, readers of a special commemorative issue of *Europe* could enjoy essays by Lefebvre and Febvre alongside reflections from Louis Hautecouer on Jacobin aesthetics, Raymond Queneau on American sympathisers with 1789, Walter Benjamin on the German philosophical response, or Edith Thomas on feminism in the French Revolution.[183] The willingness to bring in voices from outside of the academy created a platform for activists, policy-makers, émigrés and emerging authors, including women. Such breadth faciliated the affirmation of common values in the struggle against dictatorships, and outfits like the IIHRF helped lay the foundations for the "retrospective construction" of the Enlightenment in post-war public consciousness.[184] Examining the impact of the Revolution on 'civilisation' came from a neo-Kantian attempt to separate out and better preserve the enduring values of the French Revolution from contingent circumstance.

After the war, such broad coaliations were (understandably) seen as ideologically tainted and insufficienctly scholarly by the Robsepierristes, just as the privileged geography and nationalist mythologies endorsed by the IIHRF were undermined by alternative methodologies and by the de-centring of imperialist assumptions. The growing authority of economic history not only foregrounded the study of processes which undercut the conventional, national demarcations often reinforced within the international history paradigm; it also nurtured an alternative strand of Atlantic history, which re-coded the hemisphere of liberty into a zone of mercantilism, exploitation and enslavement. Whatever their differences, Soboul and Godechot both both agreed that the quantitative and serial approaches espoused by the *Annales* risked disfiguring or downgrading the significance of the Revolution as a unique, transformative event.[185] This confluence of pressures helps explain both the unpopularity of the Palmer-Godechot intervention and the rapid eclipse of the international paradigm in scholarship

[182] Marcel Reinhard, "Georges Lefebvre à la Sorbonne," *AHRF* 159 (1960): 67-722, here p.70.
[183] *L'Europe, revue menuselle: numéro spécial*, 15 juillet 1939.
[184] John Robertson, *The Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.10.
[185] Jacques Godechot, "Soboul, tel que je l'ai connu," *AHRF* 250 (1982): 537-46, here p.545.

after Sagnac's death. Yet although an abortive venture, the IIHRF merits remembering as an incubator for scholarly questions which have been taken up again in recent years in a different key, whether freemasonry networks in the eighteenth century or the repercussions of 1789 across South America.[186] Echoing debates at the Sorbonne eighty years earlier, Marc Bélissa has underlined how the competing visions of the continent's future articulated during the 1790s- a Europe of nations, a federal Europe, a Europe of the peoples, or a Europe of free-trade- continue to haunt the European Union two centuries on.[187] Beyond the quality of its research, the IIHRF, as a product of, and a prism onto, the internationalist agendas of the 1930s, illuminates the precarity of writing 'big' history in an era of geopolitical uncertainty. A supra-national optic supposed to revolutionise the existing historiography failed to free itself from structural asymmetries in international power relations; neither methodologically coherent nor necessarily progressive, the internationalism of the IIHRF was instrumentalised by different interest groups and rapidly overtaken by events. As confidence in our more recent 'global turn' begins to falter, confounded by the populist, particularist backlash in world politics, and decried as another mode of Anglospheric imperialism, it offers a lesson and a warning.[188]

[186] Yves Beaurepaire, *L'espace des francs-maçons. Une sociabilité européenne au XVIIIe siècle* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2003); Gabriel Paquette, Matthew Brown, *Connections After Colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013).
[187] Marc Belissa, "Repenser l'ordre européen (1795-1802): de la société des rois aux droits des *nations*," *AHRF 343* (2006):163-66.
[188] Jeremy Adelman, "What is Global History Now?" *Aeon*, 2 March 2017, http://aoen.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment.